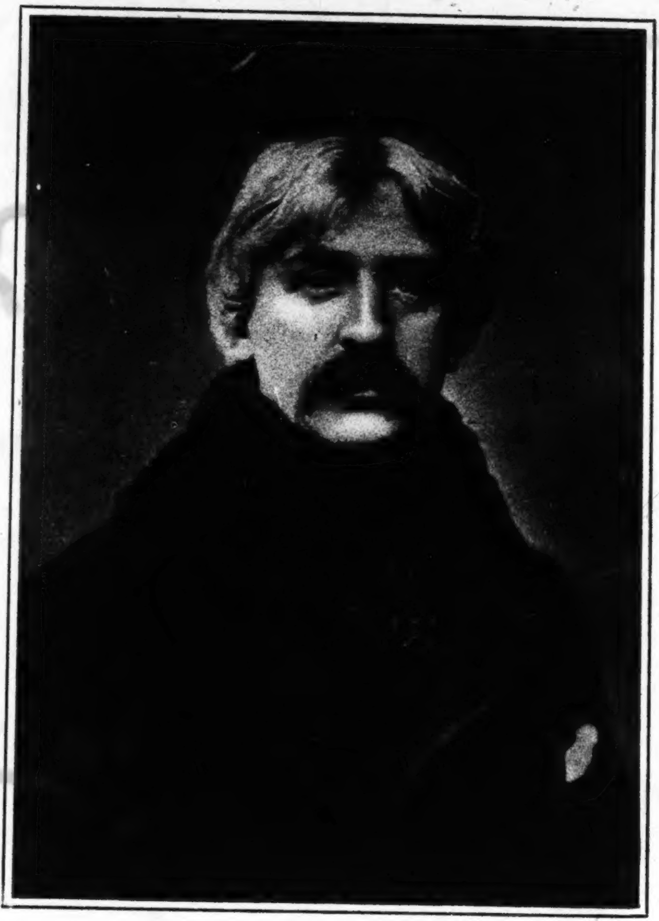
XEROX

Xerox University Microfilms
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

WESTERN AMERICANA

Reproduced from the original in the collection of
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LIBRARIES

THE LIFE OF
BRET HARTE



Yours always,
Bret Harte

From a photograph taken in Germany at the time when he was Consul at Crefeld. He inscribed this "The Herr Consul." (*Circa* 1880.)

[*Frontispiece.*

THE LIFE OF
BRET HARTE

122609

BY

T.homas EDGAR PEMBERTON

AUTHOR OF "THE KENDALS;" "ELLEN TERRY AND HER SISTERS;"
"A MEMOIR OF E. A. SOTHERN;" "THE LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF T. W. ROBERTSON;" "CHARLES DICKENS AND
THE STAGE;" "JOHN HARE, COMEDIAN;"
ETC. ETC. ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD & CO.
1903

828
H.3270
P38

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGE
BOYHOOD: "FLOUNDERING" 1

CHAPTER II

FIRST FLIGHTS: "STRUGGLING" 9

CHAPTER III

IN LIFE'S STREAM: "SWIMMING" 68

CHAPTER IV

FROM PACIFIC TO ATLANTIC SHORES 117

CHAPTER V

FROM THE NEW WORLD TO THE OLD 152

CHAPTER VI

THE CONSUL 167

CHAPTER VII

IN AND ABOUT STAGELAND 257

CONTENTS

CHAPTER VIII

PAGE
LATER DAYS, LATER FRIENDS, AND LATER WORK . 296

CHAPTER IX

"CROSSING THE BAR" 338

BIBLIOGRAPHY 346
INDEX 355

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Bret Harte when Consul at Crefeld . . *Frontispiece*
Bret Harte when 17 Years Old . . *To face page* 32
(*From a daguerrotype*)
Map of Bret Harte's California . . . „ „ 64
The "Overland Monthly" . . . . . „ „ 82
San Francisco, 1850–51 . . . . . . „ „ 102
The Home of "Truthful James" . . . „ „ 110
Bret Harte (*circa* 1871) . . . . . „ „ 126
Bret Harte (*circa* 1876) . . . . . „ „ 144
Bret Harte . . . . „ „ 170
(*From the original painting by* John Pettie, R.A.)
Bret Harte (*circa* 1899) . . . . . „ „ 208
The Red House, Camberley, Surrey . . „ „ 260
Bret Harte's Writing Table at Camberley and his Library at Lancaster Gate, London . . . . „ „ 280
Frimley Church . . . . „ „ 312
Bret Harte's Grave in Frimley Churchyard . „ „ 328
Specimens of Bret Harte's Writing . . „ „ 340

THE LIFE OF BRET HARTE

CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD: "FLOUNDERING"

FRANCIS BRET HARTE, one of America's greatest literary sons, poets, and humorists—the pioneer of the short story that in these days of rush is in even greater demand than the popular but more diffusive novel, was born at Albany, State of New York, on August 25th, 1839. His father, a well-known scholar and eminent man of letters, was Professor of Greek at the Albany College, and thus the child was brought up in the atmosphere of literature. But he was weakly; when they spoke of his health prospects, doctors shook their heads, and when he reached the age when education had to be thought of, his kindly mother (her maiden name was Truesdale) begged that he might not be "forced." His father superintended his studies, but probably hardly knew how that active little brain—stronger than the as yet delicate body—panted for knowledge.

Thus it came about that the young but fragile Bret Harte had plenty of time on his own hands, and as will presently be seen he used it to good advantage. His name Bret was the surname of his father's mother; in later years he completely dropped the Francis; it was as Bret Harte that he endeared himself to the reading world, and it is by that familiar title he will be called in these pages. He has described himself to me as a dreamy lad thirsting for information concerning the world he lived in, and naturally his first interest was in his environment.

He found plenty to engross his thoughts in this city of Albany, the capital of the State of New York, and of the county of Albany, picturesquely situated in a beautiful and fertile country on the western banks of the Hudson. At Albany the united Erie and Champlain canals join the Hudson, and the boy loved to go down to the port, to count the vessels that touched there, and to hear about the enormous quantities of timber, wheat, barley, wool, and tobacco, which constantly passed through the busy city.

There was much to be wondered at, too, at the College in which his father taught and lectured, and the stores of learning to be gleaned within those honoured walls; but his greatest delight was in the history of his birthplace.

He soon found out how Albany was founded by the Dutch in 1623, and was thus the oldest European settlement in the United States, with the exception of Jamestown in Virginia, which dates from 1607. It stirred his young blood, moreover, to find how it was captured by the British in 1664, who changed its name from Beaverwyck or Williamstadt in honour of the Duke of York and Albany, and how it received its charter in 1686, and became the capital of the State of New York in 1797.

Then he had his unformed conjectures as to the impressive Roman Catholic Cathedral, and wondered why, while his father was a constant attendant at its shrine, his mother preferred one of the Protestant churches.

In his boyish mind the busy city became a wonderland, and within its precincts he conjured up many fairy-like fancies.

I am bound to say, however, that in telling me all these things he added, in his whimsical way, that when, after an absence of many years, he, in the first flush of his literary fame, revisited Albany to deliver one of his admirable lectures before the literary society that in far-off days his father had founded, and expected to respond to a great thrill of enthusiasm coupled with emotion, he felt a keen pang of disappointment, and was angry with himself for being disappointed. The thrill that he had expected did not answer to his call.

He described it very pathetically but with a sense of humour that was irresistible, and declared his belief that all sensitive-minded people have undergone the same doleful experience.

I think he was right. The eyes of childhood magnify the beauties of their earliest surroundings.

In those boyish, dreamy days of his he must have found abundant time for reading. His keen love of romance and poetry, and his intense sense of humour soon made themselves manifest, and no doubt some of his most delightful hours were spent in bookland.

His admiration for Charles Dickens, which never waned, but, on the contrary, increased as the years rolled by, began when he read "Dombey and Son," as the novel first came out in monthly parts. This was in 1846, when he was only seven years of age, and he at once made himself master of the glorious works from the same pen which had preceded it.

When he told me this I suggested that he was not unlike Dickens's David Copperfield, and I recalled to him the lines (was it not Dickens writing of his own boyhood?): "My father had left a small collection of books in a little room upstairs to which I had access, and which nobody else in our house ever troubled. From that blessed little room 'Roderick Random,' 'Peregrine Pickle,' 'Humphrey Clinker,' 'Tom Jones,' 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' 'Don Quixote,' 'Gil Blas,' and 'Robinson Crusoe' came out, a glorious host, to keep me company. They kept alive my fancy, and something beyond that place and time—they, and the 'Arabian Nights,' and the 'Tales of the Genii'—and did me no harm, for whatever harm was in some of them was not there for me; I knew nothing of it. It is astonishing to me now how I found time, in the midst of my porings and blunderings over heavier themes, to read those books as I did. It is curious to me how I could ever have consoled myself under my small troubles (which were great troubles to me) by impersonating my favourite characters in them. . . . I have been Tom Jones (a child's Tom Jones, a harmless creature) for a week together. I have sustained my own idea of Roderick Random for a month at a stretch I verily believe. I had a greedy relish for a few volumes of Voyages and Travels—I forget what now—that were on those shelves; and for days and days I can remember to have gone about my region of our house armed with the centrepiece out of an old set of boot-trees—the perfect realisation of Captain Somebody, of the Royal British Navy, in danger of being beset by savages, and resolved to sell his life at a great price. The captain never lost dignity from having his ears boxed with the Latin Grammar. I did; but the captain was a captain and a hero, in spite of all the grammars of all the languages in the world, dead or alive. . . . Every barn in the neighbourhood, every stone in the church, and every foot of the churchyard, had some association of its own in my mind connected with these books, and stood for some locality made famous in them. I have seen Tom Pipes go climbing up the church-steeple; I have watched Strap, with the knapsack on his back, stopping to rest himself on the wicket-gate, and I *know* that Commodore Trunnion held that club with Mr. Pickle in the parlour of our little village alehouse."

"Yes," said Bret Harte, "that is so: all the books were there; the avidity to read them was there, and the ideas to which they gave birth were there; but my lines were cast in more pleasant places than those of poor little David. I had access to any number of books, and, owing to my supposed frail health, my ears were never boxed with the Latin Grammar. Besides," he added, "in addition to Smollett, Fielding, Goldsmith, Cervantes, and the rest of them, the irresistible Dickens was beginning to make a good show on my father's bookshelves."

Bret Harte always felt that he owed a deep debt of gratitude to Charles Dickens, and, as we shall see in the course of these pages, the time came when he was able to pay it back in that coin which the great English novelist would have loved to possess.

Being thus brought up—well grounded in classic lore by his father—and left much to himself for his sources of amusement, it is no wonder that the earnest and romantic boy soon felt that there was a burden on his heart and a message in his pen. At the tender age of eleven he had written a poem called "Autumn Musings." It was satirical in character, and cast upon the fading year the cynical light of his then repressed dissatisfaction (not an unusual ailment in sensitive childhood) with things in general. He sent it surreptitiously to the New York *Sunday Atlas*, and to his immense astonishment but absolute delight it appeared in all the glory of published print.

Alas! his joy was destined to be short-lived. When he proudly told his home circle of his effort and his triumph he was laughed at, and his poor poetry was saturated with a douche of cold water. Under this shock he was grief-stricken. "Sometimes," he has said, "I wonder that I ever wrote another line of verse."

It is a curious thing that young people are generally laughed at when they make any effort in the direction of authorship. No doubt it is better that young folk should be advised not to consider themselves among the few heaven-born geniuses who from time to time are sent to illuminate our world; but advice may go too far, and derision on such occasions is absolutely cruel. The child who is really likely to make a mark in the literary world is generally supersensitive, and is prone to feel a rebuff far more keenly than his more matter-of-fact brothers and sisters. In many family circles, too, there is a tradition to the effect that it is exceedingly unlikely that a boy should rise to the position of his father. In such households the bare idea that he should ever emulate the wisdom of an octogenarian grandfather who has died in his dotage would be regarded not only as an impertinence but an outrage. Happy are the fathers and mothers who quickly grasp the fact that they have son or daughter endowed with a greater number of talents than their own. Fortunate are the children whose parents resolve to show them how those talents instead of being hidden in a napkin must assuredly be multiplied.

I fear poor little Bret Harte suffered over his "Autumn Musings." "Sometimes I wonder that I ever wrote another line of verse!" Those are sad words for the author of so many beautiful poems to have uttered. Happily as the years rolled on he took heart of grace and has left the world a priceless legacy of poetry which is ever doing its good work.

In one of his earliest efforts—"The Lost Galleon"—he wrote:—

"Never a tear bedims the eye
That time and patience will not dry;
Never a lip is curved with pain
That can't be kissed into smiles again."

Many tear-laden eyes, many quivering lips have been soothed by the verses of Bret Harte. They have done more than this. They have brought the tear and the lip tremble to thousands of readers who have felt their chastening influence and thus been softened.

But though time and patience dried his eyes and brought joy into his face, the all too bold author of "Autumn Musings" never forgot that first family rebuff. I think it had something to do with the fact that, unique though his literary work was, he always disliked writing, and only plied his pen because he had found in authorship his true vocation. To the last he protested he would rather earn his income in any other way.

In the days of his childhood's "Musings" he of course longed for literary fame, but even at a very early age he resolved to have some profession or craft at his fingers' ends that would make him independent of his well-loved pen as a means of livelihood.

Hence the many youthful enterprises to be recorded in these pages, and his acceptance in later years of editorial and political posts; for though he never had an article refused by an editor or publisher, he lacked the self-confidence which in the case of hundreds is unimpaired by constant disappointment. He maintained that this rule had its good influence on his work, inasmuch as it had given him liberty to write to please himself, instead of working "to order," and in accordance with the views of the purchaser of his productions.

CHAPTER II

FIRST FLIGHTS: "STRUGGLING"

ALL too early Bret Harte's father died, and at the age of seventeen he resolved to go West in quest of the adventure and research for which his soul longed. He did not leave home without the sympathy of his mother, relatives, and friends, and he was by no means disconsolate when as a mere lad he found himself in San Francisco.

During recent years he was often asked why he did not write his autobiography. To this suggestion he always shook his head; but to his very intimate friends it was evident that the idea had taken possession of his mind, and in some of his latest stories the things that he was in the habit of talking about to those who took an affectionate interest in his earliest doings had an odd way of peeping out.

His paper entitled "Bohemian Days in San Francisco" was such a reflex of the stories he told me as we strolled about gardens and country lanes in the summer or sat in the ingle nook in the winter, that I shall not hesitate to quote from it here.

Of course he spoke of the San Francisco as he found it when he first went to seek his fortune there in 1856.

"I do not," he said, "allude to the brief days of

1849, when it was a straggling beach of huts and stranded hulks, but to the earlier stages of its development into the metropolis of California. Its first tottering steps in that direction were marked by a distinct gravity and decorum. Even during the period when the revolver settled small private difficulties, and Vigilance Committees adjudicated larger public ones, an unmistakable seriousness and respectability was the ruling sign of its governing class. It was not improbable that under the reign of the Committee the lawless and vicious class were more appalled by the moral spectacle of several thousand black-coated, serious-minded business men in embattled procession than by mere force of arms; and one 'suspect'—a prize-fighter—is known to have committed suicide in his cell after confrontation with his grave and passionless shop-keeping judges. Even that peculiar quality of Californian humour which was apt to mitigate the extravagances of the revolver and the uncertainties of poker had no place in the decorous and responsible utterance of San Francisco. The press was sober, materialistic, practical — when it was not severely admonitory of existing evil; the few smaller papers that indulged in levity were considered libellous and improper. Fancy was displaced by heavy articles on the revenues of the State and inducements to the investment of capital. Local news was under an implied censorship which suppressed anything that might tend to discourage timid or cautious capital. Episodes of romantic lawlessness or pathetic incidents of mining life were carefully edited—with the comment that these things belonged to the past, and that life and property were now 'as safe in San Francisco as in New York or London.'"

He used to laugh heartily over these serious San Francisco journals of the days of long ago, and was especially fond of an anecdote that told how a leading article dealing with one of the severer earthquakes declared that only the *unexpectedness* of the onset prevented the city from meeting it in a way that would be deterrent to all future attacks.

"I had been there a week—an idle week," he records, "spent in listless outlook for employment; a full week in my eager absorption of the strange life around me and a photographic sensitiveness to certain scenes and incidents of these days, which start out of my memory to-day as freshly as the day they impressed me.

"One of these recollections is of 'steamer night,' as it was called — the night of 'steamer day'—preceding the departure of the mail steamship with the mails for 'home.' Indeed, at that time San Francisco may be said to have lived from steamer day to steamer day; bills were made due on that day, interest computed to that period, and accounts settled. The next day was the turning of a new leaf: another essay to fortune, another inspiration of energy. So recognised was the fact that even ordinary changes of condition, social and domestic, were put aside until *after* steamer day. 'I'll see what I can do after next steamer day,' was the common cautious or hopeful formula. It was the 'Saturday night' of many a wage-earner, and to him a night of festivity. The thoroughfares were animated and crowded; the saloons and the theatres full. I can recall myself at such times wandering along the City Front, as the business part of San Francisco was then called. Here the lights were burning all night, the first streaks of dawn finding the merchants still at their counting-house desks. I remember the dim lines of warehouses lining the insecure wharves of rotten piles, half filled in—that had ceased to be wharves but had not yet become streets—their treacherous yawning depths, with the uncertain gleam of tar-like mud below, at times still vocal with the lap and gurgle of the tide. I remember the weird stories of disappearing men found afterwards imbedded in the ooze in which they had fallen and gasped their life away. I remember the two or three ships, ~~still~~ left standing where they were beached a year or two before, built in between warehouses, their bows projecting into the roadway. There was the dignity of the sea and its boundless freedom in their beautiful curves which the abutting houses could not destroy, and even something of the sea's loneliness in the far-spaced ports and cabin windows lit up by the lamps of the prosaic landsmen who plied their trades behind them. One of these ships transformed into a hotel retained its name, 'The Niantic,' and part of its characteristic interior unchanged. I remember these ships' old tenants—the rats—who had increased and multiplied to such an extent that at night they fearlessly crossed the wayfarer's path at every turn, and even invaded the gilded saloons of Montgomery Street. In the

'Niantic' their pit-a-pat was met on every staircase, and it was said that sometimes in an excess of sociability they accompanied the traveller to his room. In the early 'cloth and papered' houses, so called because the ceilings were not plastered, but simply covered by stretched and whitewashed cloth—their scamperings were plainly indicated in zigzag movements of the sagging cloth, or they became actually visible by finally dropping through the holes they had worn in it! I remember the house whose foundations were made of boxes of plug tobacco—part of a jettisoned cargo—used instead of more expensive lumber; and the adjacent warehouse where the trunks of the early and forgotten 'forty-niners' were stored, and, never claimed by their dead or missing owners, were finally sold at auction. I remember the strong breath of the sea over all, and the constant onset of the trade winds which helped to disinfect the deposit of dirt and grime, decay and wreckage which were stirred up in the later evolutions of the city."

Truly another young David Copperfield, the prototype of Charles Dickens; but whereas poor David gazed at the murky Thames as it flowed by the old London Hungerford Market, Bret Harte pondered over the vast waters of the Pacific Ocean as they glided through the Golden Gate of California.

Then he recalls, "with the same sense of youthful satisfaction and unabated wonder," his wanderings through the Spanish quarter, where three centuries of quaint customs, speech and dress were still preserved; where the proverbs of Sancho Panza were still spoken in the language of Cervantes, and the high-flown illusions of the La Manchian knight still a part of the Spanish Californian hidalgo's dream. "I recall," he says, "the more modern 'Greaser' or Mexican—his index finger steeped in cigarette stains; his velvet jacket and his crimson sash; the many-flounced skirt and lace manta of his women, and their caressing intonations—the one musical utterance of the whole hard-voiced city. I suppose I had a boy's digestion and bluntness of taste in those days, for the combined odour of tobacco, burned paper, and garlic which marked that melodious breath did not affect me."

These pictures of his, conjured up after many years, but often referred to in his conversations with his intimate friends, are like a series of vivid yet softly dissolving views. He puts another slide into the magic lantern of his memory, and having brought it into focus, he says:—

"Perhaps from my Puritan training I experienced a more fearful joy in the gambling saloons. They were the largest and most comfortable, even as they were the most expensively decorated, rooms in San Francisco. Here, again, the gravity and decorum which I have already alluded to were present at that earlier period, though perhaps from concentration of another kind. People staked and lost their last dollar with a calm solemnity and a resignation that was almost Christian. The oaths, exclamations, and feverish interruptions which often characterised more dignified assemblies were absent here. There was no room for the lesser vices; there was little or no drunkenness; the gaudily-dressed and painted women who presided over the wheels of fortune or performed on the harp and piano attracted no attention from these ascetic players. The man who had won ten thousand dollars and the man who had lost everything rose from the table with equal silence and imperturbability. *I* never witnessed any tragic sequel to those losses; *I* never heard of any suicide on account of them. Neither can I recall any quarrel or murder directly attributable to this kind of gambling. It must be remembered that these public games were chiefly *rouge-et-noir*, monté, faro, or roulette, in which the antagonist was Fate, Chance, Method, or the impersonal 'bank,' which was supposed to represent them all; there was no individual opposition or rivalry; nobody challenged the decision of the 'croupier' or dealer.

"I remember a conversation at the door of one saloon which was as characteristic for its brevity as it was a type of the prevailing stoicism. 'Hello,' said a departing miner, as he recognised a brother miner coming in, 'when did you come down?' 'This morning,' was the reply. 'Made a strike at the bar?' suggested the first speaker. 'You bet!' said the other, and passed in. I chanced an hour later to be at the same place when they met again—their relative positions changed. 'Hello! Whar now?' said the incomer. 'Back to the bar.' 'Cleaned out?' 'You bet!' Not a word more explained a common situation.

"My first youthful experience at those tables was an accidental one. I was watching roulette one evening, intensely absorbed in the mere movement of the players. Either they were so preoccupied with the game, or I was really looking older than my actual years, but a bystander laid his hand familiarly on my shoulder, and said as to an ordinary *habitué*, 'Ef you're not chippin' in yourself, pardner, s'pose you give *me* a show.' Now I honestly believe that up to that moment I had no intention, nor even a desire, to try my own fortune. But in the embarrassment of the sudden address I put my hand in my pocket, drew out a coin, and laid it, with an attempt at carelessness, but a vivid consciousness that I was blushing, upon a vacant number. To my horror I saw that I had put down a large coin—the bulk of my possessions! I did not flinch, however; I think any boy who reads this will understand my feeling; it was not only my coin but my manhood at stake. I gazed with a miserable show of indifference at the players, at the chandelier, anywhere but at the dreadful ball running round the wheel. There was a pause; the game was declared, the rake rattled up and down, but still I did not look at the table. Indeed, in my inexperience of the game and my embarrassment, I doubt if I should have known if I had won or not. I had made up my mind that I should lose, but I must do so like a man, and, above all, without giving the least suspicion that I was a greenhorn. I even affected to be listening to the music. The wheel spun again; the game was declared, the rake was busy, but I did not move. At last the man I had displaced touched me on the arm and whispered, 'Better make a straddle and divide your stake this time.' I did not understand him, but as I saw he was looking at the board, I was obliged to look too. I drew back dazed and bewildered! Where my coin had lain a moment before was a glittering heap of gold.

"My stake had doubled, quadrupled, and doubled again. I did not know how much then—I do not know how much now—it may not have been more than three or four hundred dollars—but it dazzled and frightened me. 'Make your game, gentlemen,' said the croupier monotonously. I thought he looked at me—indeed, everybody seemed to be looking at me—and my companion repeated his warning. But here I must again appeal to the boyish reader in defence of my idiotic obstinacy. To have taken advice would have shown my youth. I shook my head: I could not trust my voice. I smiled, but with a sinking heart, and let my stake remain. The ball again sped round the wheel and stopped. There was a pause. The croupier indolently advanced his rake and swept my whole pile with others into the bank! I had lost it all. Perhaps it may be difficult to explain why I actually felt relieved, and even to some extent triumphant, but I seemed to have asserted my grown up independence—possibly at the cost of reducing the number of my meals for days; but what of that? I was a man! I wish I could say that it was a lesson to me. I am afraid it was not. It was true that I did not gamble again, but then I had no especial desire to, and there was no temptation. I am afraid it was an incident without a moral. Yet it had one touch characteristic of the period which I like to remember. The man who had spoken to me, I think, suddenly realised, at the moment of my disastrous *coup*, the fact of my extreme youth. He moved towards the banker, and leaning over him whispered a few words. The banker looked up, half impatiently, half kindly—his hand straying tentatively towards the pile of coin. Instinctively I knew what he meant, and summoning up my determination, met his eyes with all the indifference I could assume."

But it was the sense of such good deeds, intended if not actually fulfilled, in a naughty world that made Bret Harte feel that there might be more of good in the hearts of the lawless men with whom he was soon to mingle than had yet been dreamt of in the philosophic mind of the superior person.

Then he gets away from the gambling saloon and its snares, and another mental picture is thrown upon the screen.

"I had at that period," he says, "a small room at the top of a house owned by a distant relation—a second or third cousin, I think. He was a man of independent and original character, had a Ulyssean experience of men and cities, and an old English name of which he was proud. While in London he had procured from the Heralds' College his family arms, whose crest was stamped upon a quantity of plate he had brought with him to California. The plate, together with an exceptionally good cook whom he had also brought, and his own epicurean tastes, he utilised in the usual practical Californian fashion by starting a rather expensive half club, half restaurant in the lower part of the building—which he ruled somewhat autocratically, as became his crest! The restaurant was too expensive for me to patronise, but I saw many of its frequenters as well as those who had rooms at the club. They were men of very distinct personality; a few celebrated, and nearly all notorious. They represented a Bohemianism—if such it could be called—less innocent than my later experiences. I remember, however, one handsome young fellow whom I used to meet occasionally on the staircase, who captured my youthful fancy. I met him only at midday, as he did not rise till late, and this fact, with a certain scrupulous elegance and neatness in his dress, ought to have made me suspect that he was a gambler. In my inexperience it only invested him with a certain romantic mystery.

"One morning as I was going out to my very early breakfast at a cheap Italian café on Long Wharf, I was surprised to find him also descending the staircase. He was scrupulously dressed, even at that early hour, but I was struck by the fact that he was all in black, and his slight figure, buttoned to the throat in a tightly-fitting frock-coat, gave, I fancied, a singular melancholy to his pale Southern face. Nevertheless, he greeted me with more than his usual serene cordiality, and I remembered that he looked up with a half-puzzled, half-amused expression at the rosy morning sky as he walked a few steps with me down the deserted street. I could not help saying that I was astonished to see him up so early, and he admitted that it was a break in his usual habits, but added with a smiling significance I afterwards remembered, that it was 'an even chance if he did it again.' As we neared the street corner a man in a buggy drove up impatiently. In spite of the driver's evident haste, my handsome acquaintance got in leisurely, and lifting his glossy hat to me, with a pleasant smile, was driven away. I have a very lasting impression of his face and figure as the buggy disappeared down the empty street. I never saw him again. It was not until a week later that I knew that an hour after he left me that morning he was lying dead in a little hollow behind the Mission Dolores—shot through the heart in a duel for which he had risen so early."

Thus it will be seen that Bret Harte had barely passed his boyhood before he saw the type for his wonderfully limned characters, John Oakhurst and Jack Hamlin. And yet since his death writers have been bold enough to say such characters could not have existed.

"I recall another incident of that period," he continues, "equally characteristic, but less tragic in sequel. I was in the restaurant one morning talking to my cousin, when a man entered hastily and said something to him in a hurried whisper. My cousin contracted his eyebrows and uttered a suppressed oath. Then with a gesture of warning to the man he crossed the room quietly where a regular *habitué* of the restaurant was lazily finishing his breakfast. A large silver coffee-pot with a stiff wooden handle stood on the table before him. My cousin leaned over the guest familiarly, and apparently made some hospitable inquiry as to his wants. Then—possibly because my curiosity having been excited I was watching him more intently than the others—*I* saw what probably no one else saw, that he deliberately upset the coffee-pot and its contents over the guest's shirt and waistcoat. As the victim sprang up with an exclamation, my cousin overwhelmed him with apologies for his carelessness, and, with protestations of sorrow for the accident, actually insisted on dragging the man upstairs into his own private room, where he furnished him with a shirt and waistcoat of his own. The side door had scarcely closed upon them, and I was still lost in wonder at what I had seen, when a man entered from the street. He was one of the desperate set I have already spoken of, and thoroughly well known to those present. He cast a glance or two around the room, nodded to one or two of the guests, and then walked to a side table and took up a newspaper. I was conscious at once that a singular restraint had come over the other guests—a nervous awkwardness that at last seemed to make itself known to the man himself, who, after an affected yawn or two, laid down the paper and walked out.

"'That was a mighty close call,' said one of the guests with a sigh of relief.

"'You bet! And the coffee-pot spill was the luckiest kind of accident for Peters,' remarked another.

"'For both,' added the first speaker; 'for Peters was armed too, and would have seen him come in!'

"A word or two explained all. Peters and the last comer had quarrelled a day or two before, and had separated with the intention to 'shoot on sight'—that is, wherever they met, a form of duel common to those days. The accidental meeting in the restaurant would have been the occasion, with the usual sanguinary consequence, but for the word of warning given to my cousin by a passer-by who knew that Peters' antagonist was coming to the restaurant to look at the papers. Had my cousin repeated the warning to Peters himself he would only have prepared him for the conflict, which he would not have shirked, and so precipitated the affray.

"The ruse of upsetting the coffee-pot, which everybody but myself thought an accident, was to get him out of the room before the other entered. I was too young then to venture to intrude upon my cousin's secrets, but two or three years afterwards I taxed him with the trick and he admitted it regretfully. I believe that a strict interpretation of the 'code' would have condemned his act as unsportsmanlike, if not *unfair!*"

Such were the strange surroundings and characters that filled his young mind with wonder and imagination, and from which in later years he drew so much valuable material for his stories.

He marvelled, too, at the Chinamen who at that time were rapidly adding to the strangely intermingled population of San Francisco. In them he found a remarkable and picturesque contrast to the bustling, breathless, and brand-new life of the City, and to the comparatively listless and procrastinating Spaniards. The latter seldom flaunted their faded dignity in the principal thoroughfares. "John" Chinaman was to be met everywhere.

"It was a common thing," he said, "to see a long file of sampan coolies carrying their baskets slung between them, on poles, jostling a modern, well-dressed crowd in Montgomery Street, or to get a whiff of their burned punk in the side streets; while the road leading to their temporary burial-ground at Lone Mountain was littered with slips of coloured paper scattered from their funerals. They brought an atmosphere of the Arabian Nights into the hard, modern, civilisation; their shops—not always confined at that time to a Chinese quarter—were replicas of the bazaars of Canton and Peking, with their quaint displays of little dishes on which tit-bits of food delicacies were exposed for sale, all of the dimensions and unreality of a doll's kitchen or a child's house-keeping. They were a revelation to the Eastern immigrant, whose preconceived ideas of them were borrowed from the ballet or pantomime; they did not wear scalloped drawers and hats with jingling bells on their points, nor did I ever see them dance with their forefingers vertically extended. They were always neatly dressed, even the commonest of coolies, and their festive dresses were marvels. As traders they were grave and patient; as servants they were sad and civil, and all were singularly infantine in their natural simplicity. The living representatives of the oldest civilisation in the world, they seemed like children. Yet they kept their beliefs and sympathies to themselves, never fraternising with the *fanqui*, or foreign devil, or losing their singular racial qualities. They indulged in their own peculiar habits; of their social and inner life San Francisco knew but little and cared less. Even at this early period, and before I came to know them more intimately, I remember an incident of their daring fidelity to their own customs that was accidentally revealed to me. I had become acquainted with a Chinese youth of about my own age, as I imagined—although from mere outward appearance it was generally impossible to judge of a Chinaman's age between the limits of seventeen and forty years—and he had, in a burst of confidence, taken me to see some characteristic sights in a Chinese warehouse within a stone's-throw of the Plaza. I was struck by the singular circumstance that while the warehouse was an erection of wood in the ordinary hasty Californian style, there were certain brick and stone divisions in its interior, like small rooms or closets, evidently added by the Chinamen tenants. My companion stopped before a long, very narrow entrance, a mere longitudinal slit in the brick wall, and with a wink of infantine devilry motioned me to look inside. I did so, and saw a room, really a cell, of fair height but scarcely six feet square, and barely able to contain a rude, slanting couch of stone covered with matting, on which lay, at a painful angle, a richly-dressed Chinaman. A single glance at his dull, staring, abstracted eyes and half-opened mouth showed me he was in an opium trance. This was not in itself a novel sight, and I was moving away when I was suddenly startled by the appearance of his hands, which were stretched helplessly before him on his body, and at first sight seemed to be in a kind of wicker cage. I then saw that his finger nails were seven or eight inches long, and were supported by bamboo splints. Indeed they were no longer human nails, but twisted and distorted quills, giving him the appearance of having gigantic claws. 'Velly big Chinaman,' whispered my cheerful friend; 'first-chopman—high classee—no can washee—no can eat—no dlinke, no catchee him own glub allee same nothee man—China boy must catchee glub for him, allee time! Oh, him first-chopman—you bettee!'

"I had heard of this singular custom of indicating caste before, and was amazed and disgusted, but I was not prepared for what followed. My companion, evidently thinking he had impressed me, grew more reckless as showman, and saying to me, 'Now me showee you one funny thing—heap makee you laugh,' led me hurriedly across a little courtyard swarming with chickens and rabbits, when he stopped before another enclosure. Suddenly brushing past an astonished Chinaman who seemed to be standing guard, he thrust me into the enclosure in front of a most extraordinary object. It was a Chinaman wearing a huge, square, wooden frame fastened around his neck like a collar, and fitting so tightly and rigidly that the flesh rose in puffy weals around his cheeks. He was chained to a post, although it was as impossible for him to have escaped with his wooden cage through the narrow doorway as it was for him to lie down and rest in it. Yet I am bound to say that his eyes and face expressed nothing but apathy, and there was no appeal to the sympathy of the stranger. My companion said hurriedly, 'Velly bad man; steelee heap from Chinamen,' and then, apparently alarmed at his own indiscreet intrusion, hustled me away as quickly as possible amid a shrill cackling of protestation from a few of his own countrymen who had joined the one who was keeping guard. In another moment we were in the street again—scarce a step from the Plaza, in the full light of Western civilisation—not a stone's-throw from the Courts of Justice.

"My companion took to his heels and left me standing there bewildered and indignant. I could not rest until I had told my story, but without betraying my companion, to an elder acquaintance, who laid the facts before the police authorities. I had expected to be closely cross-examined—to be doubted—to be disbelieved. To my surprise, I was told that the police already had cognisance of similar cases of illegal and barbarous punishments, but that the victims themselves refused to testify against their countrymen—and it was impossible to convict or even to identify them. 'A white man can't tell one Chinese from another, and there are always a dozen of 'em ready to swear that the man you've got isn't the one.' I was startled to reflect that I, too, could not have conscientiously sworn to either jailer or the tortured prisoner, or perhaps even to my cheerful companion. The police on some pretext made a raid upon the premises a day or two afterwards, but without result. I wondered if they had caught sight of the high-class, first-chop individual with the helplessly outstretched fingers, as that story I had kept to myself.

"But these barbaric vestiges in John Chinaman's habits did not affect his relations with the San Franciscans. He was singularly peaceful, docile, and harmless as a servant, and, with rare exceptions, honest and temperate. If he sometimes matched cunning with cunning, it was the flattery of imitation. He did most of the menial work of San Francisco, and did it cleanly. Except that he exhaled a peculiar drug-like odour, he was not personally offensive in domestic contact, and by virtue of being the recognised laundry-man of the whole community his own blouses were always freshly washed and ironed. His conversational reserve arose, not from his having to deal with an unfamiliar language—for he had picked up a varied and picturesque vocabulary with ease—but from his natural temperament. He was devoid of curiosity, and utterly unimpressed by anything but the purely business concerns of those he served. Domestic secrets were safe with him: his indifference to your thoughts, actions, and feelings had all the contempt which his three thousand years of history and his innate belief in your inferiority seemed to justify. He was blind and deaf in your household, because you didn't interest him in the least. It was said that a gentleman who wished to test his impassiveness arranged with his wife to come home one day and, in the hearing of his Chinese waiter—who was more than usually intelligent—to disclose with well simulated emotion the details of a murder he had just committed. He did so. The Chinaman heard it without a sign of horror or attention even to the lifting of an eyelid, but continued his duties unconcerned. Unfortunately, the gentleman, in order to increase the horror of the situation, added that now there was nothing left for him but to cut his own throat. At this John quietly left the room. The gentleman was delighted with the success of his ruse until the door reopened and John reappeared with his master's razor, which he quietly slipped—as if it had been a forgotten fork—beside his master's plate, and calmly resumed his serving. I have always considered this story to be quite as improbable as it was inartistic, from its tacit admission of a certain interest on the part of the Chinaman. I never knew one who would be sufficiently concerned to go for the razor.

"His taciturnity and reticence may have been confounded with rudeness of address, although he was always civil enough. 'I see you have listened to me and done exactly what I told you,' said a lady, commending some performance of her servant after a previous lengthy lecture; 'that's very nice.' 'Yes,' said John calmly, 'you talkee allee time; talkee allee too much.'

"'I always find Ling very polite,' said another lady, speaking of her cook, 'but I wish he did not always say to me, "Good-night, John," in a high, falsetto voice.' She had not recognised the fact that he was simply repeating her own salutation with his marvellous instinct of relentless imitation, even as to voice."

Bret Harte could tell endless anecdotes of this description, for, as his verses and stories testify, he made a minute study of the Chinamen who had so impressed him in his boyish days at San Francisco. In common with the famous Heathen Chinee, Ah Sin, "John's" favourite pastime seems to have been gambling, but a strange and humorous anecdote is recorded of a company of Chinese jugglers who had been engaged to perform at one of the leading "'Frisco" theatres on the strength of its native reputation, and in the hope of drawing a large audience of celestials. They had not been seen by the American manager before the evening of their promised appearance, and it so happened that his theatre was filled with an audience of decorous and respectable San Franciscans of both sexes. It was suddenly emptied in the middle of the performance: the curtain came down with an alarmed and blushing manager apologising to deserted benches, and the show abruptly terminated. Exactly *what* had happened never appeared in the public papers nor in the published apology of the manager. It afforded a few days' mirth for wicked San Francisco, and it was epigrammatically summed up in the remark that "no woman could be found in San Francisco who was at that performance and no man who was not."

Bret Harte also took a keen interest in the curious methods of the Chinese medicine men. At the time when he first came into contact with this singular race he met an ordinary native Chinese doctor, who, practising entirely among his own countrymen, was reputed to have made extraordinary cures with two or three American patients. With no other advertising than this, and apparently no other inducement offered to the public than what their curiosity suggested, he was presently besieged by hopeful and eager sufferers. Hundreds of patients were turned away from his crowded doors. Two interpreters sat, day and night, translating the ills of ailing San Francisco to this medical oracle and dispensing his prescriptions—usually small powders—in exchange for current coin. In vain the regular practitioners pointed out that the Chinese possessed no superior medical knowledge, and that their religion, which proscribed dissection and autopsies, naturally limited their understanding of the body into which they put their drugs. Finally, they prevailed upon one eminent Chinese authority to give them a list of the remedies generally used in the Chinese pharmacopœia, and this was privately circulated. For obvious reasons it was not published and cannot be explained here; but it was summed up—again after the usual Californian epigrammatic style—by the remark that "whatever were the comparative merits of Chinese and American practice, a simple perusal of the list would prove that the Chinese were capable of producing the most powerful emetic known." The craze subsided in a single day; the interpreters and their oracle vanished, the Chinese doctors' signs which had multiplied disappeared, and San Francisco awoke cured of its madness at the cost of some thousand dollars.

Such were some of the traits of a race whose peculiarities subsequently figured so vividly and humorously in Bret Harte's writings. He never forgot the early impression they made upon him, and during his long sojourn in England he loved to conjure them up and give them a place in his stories.

Concerning their medical prescriptions he told me many weird, not to say horrible, things; and I gathered that when he was permitted to dose the all-powerful "Mellicans," John was inclined to be a little malicious and, from his point of view, to match cunning with cunning.

He often wondered how he could introduce their artful practices into a story, and no doubt he had them in his mind when he penned one of his most recent Chinese sketches entitled "See Yup."

He describes a group of Californian miners suffering torments from dyspepsia. They have tried every quack pill and panacea advertised, and are lounging in the bar-room of a city saloon bewailing their woes and anathematising the nostrums that have failed to relieve them, when one of the party, Cyrus Parker, says:—

"'Well, gen'lemen, ye kin talk of your patent medicines, and I've tackled 'em all, but only the other day I struck suthin' that I'm goin' to hang on to, you bet.'

"Every eye was turned moodily to the speaker, but no one said anything.

"'And I didn't get it outer advertisements nor off circulars. I got it outer my head, just by solid thinkin',' continued Parker.

"'What is it, Cy?' demanded one unsophisticated and inexperienced sufferer.

"Instead of replying, Parker, like a true artist, knowing he had the ear of his audience, dramatically flashed a question upon them.

"'Did you ever hear of a Chinaman having dyspepsy?'

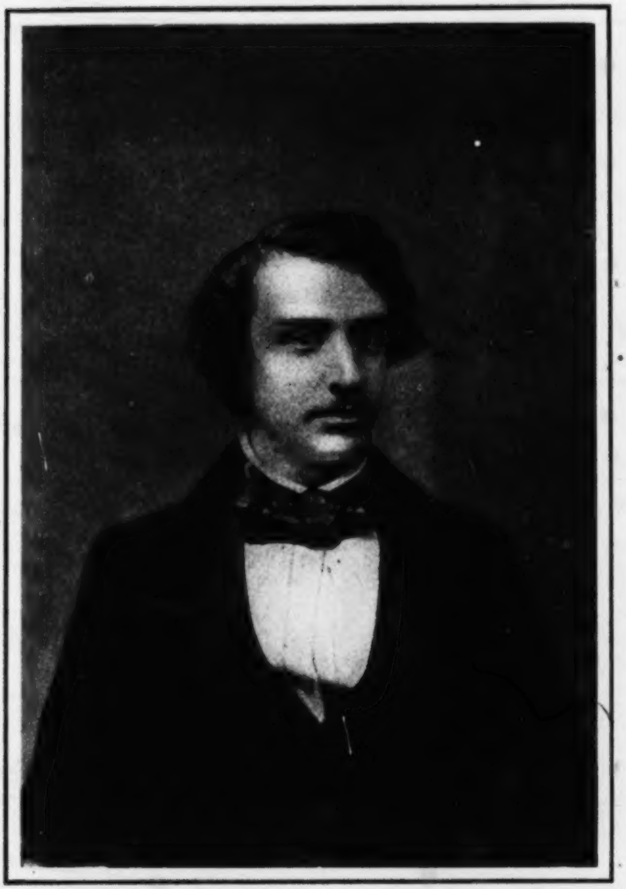
"'Never heard he had sabe enough to have *anything*,' said a scorner.

"'No, but *did* ye?' insisted Parker.

"'Well, no,' chorused the group. They were evidently struck with the fact.

"'Of course you didn't,' said Parker triumphantly. ''Cos they *ain't*. Well, gen'lemen, it didn't seem to me the square thing that a pesky lot o' yellow-skinned heathens should be built different to a white man, and never know the tortur' that a Christian feels; and one day, arter dinner, when I was just a lyin' flat down on the bank, squirmin', and clutchin' the short grass to keep from yellin', who should go by but that pizened See Yup, with a grin on his face?'

"'Mellican man plenty playee to him Joss after eatin',' sez he; 'but Chinaman smellee punk, allee same, and no hab got.'



Bret Harte, from a daguerrotype taken when he was 17 years old, and shortly before he set out for the Californian goldfields.

[To face p. 32.

"'I knew the slimy cuss was just purtendin' he thought I was prayin' to my Joss, but I was that weak I hadn't stren'th, boys, to heave a rock at him. Yet it gave me an idea.'

"'What was it?' they asked eagerly.

"'I went down to his shop the next day, when he was alone, and I was feelin' mighty bad, and I got hold of his pigtail and allowed I'd stuff it down his throat if he didn't tell me what he meant. Then he took a piece of punk and lit it, and put it under my nose, and, darn my skin, gen'lemen, you mightn't believe me, but in a minute I felt better, and after a whiff or two I was all right.'

"'Was it powerful strong, Cy?' asked the inexperienced one.

"'No,' said Parker, 'and that's just what got me. It was a sort o' dreamy, spicy smell, like a hot night. But as I couldn't go round 'mong you boys with a lighted piece o' punk in my hands, ez if I was settin' off fourth o' July fire-crackers, I asked him if he couldn't fix me up suthin' in another shape that would be handier to use when I was took bad—and I'd reckon to pay him for it, like ez I'd pay him for any other patent medicine. So he fixed me up this.'

"He put his hand in his pocket and drew out a small red paper, which, when opened, disclosed a pink powder. It was gravely passed around the group.

"'Why, it smells and tastes like ginger,' said one.

"'It is only ginger!' said another scornfully.

"'Mebbee it is and mebbee it isn't,' returned Cy Parker stoutly. 'Mebbee it's only my fancy; but if it's the sort o' stuff to bring on that fancy, and that fancy *cures* me, it's all the same. I've got about two dollars' worth o' that fancy, or that ginger, and I'm goin' to stick to it. You hear me?' And he carefully put it back in his pocket.

"At which criticisms and gibes broke forth. If he (Cy Parker), a white man, was going to 'demean himself' by consulting a Chinese quack, he'd better buy up a lot o' idols and stand 'em up around his cabin. If he had that sort o' confidences with See Yup, he ought to go to work with him on his cheap tailings, and be fumigated all at the same time. If he'd been smoking an opium pipe instead of smelling punk he ought to be man enough to confess it. Yet it was noticeable that they were all very anxious to examine the packet again, but Cy Parker was alike indifferent to demand or entreaty."

But one by one the suffering sceptics, in secret fashion, followed the example set by Cyrus Parker and became the patients of See Yup. About a month later Doctor Duchesne (an admirably drawn character of a kindly-hearted but somewhat brusque old army surgeon, who figures in many of Bret Harte's stories) strolled into the Palmetto saloon where the mining comrades again sought recreation. After he had exchanged salutations with the company in his usual hearty fashion, and accepted their invitation to drink, Cy Parker, "with a certain affected carelessness, which did not, however, conceal a singular hesitation in his speech, began—

"'I've been wantin' to ask ye a question, Doc—

C

a sort o' darned fool question, ye know—nothing in the way of consultation, don't you see, tho' it's kinder in the way o' your purfeshion. *Sabe?*'

"'Go on, Cy,' said the doctor good-humouredly, 'this is my dispensary hour.'

"'Oh, it ain't anything about symptoms, Doc, and there ain't anything the matter with me. It's only just to ask ye if ye happened to know anything about the medical practice of these yer Chinamen?'

"'I don't know,' said the doctor bluntly, 'and I don't know anybody who does.'

"There was a sudden silence in the bar, and the doctor, putting down his glass, continued with slight professional precision—

"'You see the Chinese know nothing of anatomy from personal observation. Autopsies and dissection are against their superstitions, which declare the human body sacred, and are consequently never practised.'

"There was a slight movement of inquiring interest among the party, and Cy Parker, after a meaning glance at the others, went on half aggressively, half apologetically—

"'In course they ain't surgeons like you, Doc, but that don't keep them from having their own little medicines, just as dogs eat grass, you know. Now, I want to put it to you, as a fa'r-minded man, if yer mean to say that, jest because those old women who serve out yarbs and spring medicines in families don't know anything of anatomy they ain't fit to give us their simple and nat'ral medicines?'

"'But the Chinese medicines are not simple or natural,' said the doctor coolly.

"'Not simple?' echoed the party, closing round him.

"'I don't mean to say,' continued the doctor, glancing around at their eager excited faces with an appearance of wonder, 'that they are positively noxious, unless taken in large quantities, for they are not drugs at all; but I certainly should not call them "simple." Do *you* know what they principally are?'

"'Well, no,' said Parker cautiously, 'perhaps not *exactly*.'

"'Come a little nearer and I'll tell you.'

"Not only Parker's head but the others were bent over the counter. Doctor Duchesne uttered a few words in a tone inaudible to the rest of the company. There was a profound silence, broken at last by Abe Wynford's voice.

"'Ye kin pour me out about three fingers o' whisky, Barkeep. I'll take it straight.'

"'Same to me,' said the others.

"The men gulped down their liquor: two of them quietly passed out. The doctor wiped his lips, buttoned his coat, and began to draw on his riding gloves.

"'I've heard,' said Poker Jack of Shasta with a faint smile on his white face, as he toyed with the last drops of liquor in his glass, 'that the darned fools sometimes smell punk as a medicine, eh?'

"'Yes, *that's* comparatively decent,' said the doctor reflectively. 'It's only sawdust mixed with a little gum and formic acid.'

"'Formic acid? Wot's that?'

"'A very peculiar acid secreted by ants. It is supposed to be used by them offensively in warfare, just as the skunk, eh?'

"But Poker Jack of Shasta had hurriedly declared that he wanted to speak to a man who was passing, and had disappeared. The doctor walked to the door, mounted his horse, and rode away. I noticed, however, there was a slight smile on his bronzed impassive face. This led me to wonder if he was entirely ignorant of the purpose for which he had been questioned, and the effect of his information. I was confirmed in the belief by the remarkable circumstance that nothing more was said of it; the incident seemed to have terminated there, and the victims made no attempt to revenge themselves on See Yup. That they had, one and all, secretly and unknown to each other patronised him there was no doubt; but at the same time, as they evidently were not sure that Dr. Duchesne had not hoaxed them in regard to the quality of See Yup's medicines, they knew that an attack on the unfortunate Chinaman would, in either case, reveal their secret and expose them to the ridicule of their brother miners. So the matter dropped, and See Yup remained master of the situation."

Having reaped an abundant harvest of indelible impressions in San Francisco, and finding nothing to occupy him there, young Bret Harte, in search of a vocation, and full of curiosity, set off in the wake of the gold seekers he so happily called "The Argonauts of '49." From his expedition he was to bring home a Golden Fleece far more valuable to the thinking world than any represented by auriferous nuggets or weighty bags of glittering gold dust. Lessons such as he learned in those rough Californian days, and with a generous hand and matchless pen gave to all who cared to profit by them, made thousands and thousands of us far richer than mere gold will ever do. He went into a country formed to fascinate one of his romantic and imaginative temperament. The natural grandeur and beauty of it, his knowledge of its early occupation by the Spanish, and the legends clinging to the old mission houses made it an unexplored fairy-land for fancy; and in startling contrast to this dreamy vision and the leisurely Spaniards who had *Hasta mañana* ("Wait till to-morrow") for one of their favourite bywords, he found the extraordinary crowd of later-day humanity jostling against each other in their hot haste to be among the first in the fierce and exciting race for wealth.

It must have been an extraordinary and probably unexampled experience. Hordes of strong men clad in red shirts and high boots striving against each other in the wild fight for gold: all young and muscular men, for no old man or semi-invalid could have borne the roughness and the fatigue of the life. "On one occasion," he has recorded, "I remember an elderly man—he was fifty perhaps, but he had a grey beard—and he was pointed out as a curiosity, and men turned to look at him as they would have looked at any other unfamiliar object." And yet these miners, roughing it in a manner that would be intolerable even to our English "navvies," were civilised, many of them being men of culture and even high attainments, but anxious (no doubt in full recollection of bitter disappointments) to win their way to fortune by a short cut. Women were almost unknown; but when they did appear in the camps, and proved themselves worthy of regard, they were treated with that tenderness and chivalry that appealed to the heart of the gently-nurtured son of the Albany professor, and formed the theme for so many of his exquisite stories. Such a strange change in the life of one only approaching manhood has surely hardly ever been.

Little by little he traced out the history of this unfamiliar throng and found how they had at first lived in tents, then in cabins. The climate was gracious, and except for the rudest purposes of shelter in the winter rains they could have slept out of doors the year round, as many preferred to do. As they grew more ambitious perhaps a small plot of ground was enclosed and cultivated, but for the first few years they looked upon themselves as tenants at will, and were afraid of putting down anything they could not take away. Chimneys to their cabins were for a long time avoided, as having this objectionable feature. Long after the arrival of the earliest Argonauts, deserted mining camps were marked by the solitary adobe chimneys still left standing when the frame of the original cabin was moved to some newer location.

Their housekeeping was of the rudest kind. For many months the fryingpan formed their only available cooking utensil. It was lashed to the wandering miner's back like the troubadour's guitar. He fried his bread, his beans, his bacon, and occasionally stewed his coffee in this single vessel. But that nature worked for him with a balsamic air and breezy tonic he might have succumbed. Happily his meals were few and infrequent; happily the inventions of his mother earth were equal to his needs. His progressive tracks through these mountain solitudes were marked with tin cans bearing the inscription, "Cove Oysters," "Shaker Sweet Corn," "Yeast Powder," "Boston Crackers," and the like. But in the hour of adversity and the moment of perplexity his main reliance was beans! It was the sole legacy of the Spanish Californian.

The Argonaut's dress was peculiar. He was ready, if not skilful, with his needle, and was fond of patching his clothes until the original material disappeared beneath a cloud of amendments. The flour sack was his main dependence. When its contents had sustained and comforted the inner man, the husk clothed the outer man. Two gentlemen of respectability in earlier days lost their identity in the labels somewhat conspicuously borne on their trousers, and were known to the camp in all seriousness as "Genesee Mills" and "Eagle Brand."

In the Southern Mines they bought up a quantity of seamen's clothing condemned by the navy department and sold at auction. For a year after the sombre woodland shades were lightened by the white ducks and blue and white shirts of these sailor landsmen. It was odd that the only picturesque bit of colour in their dress was accidental and owing to a careless, lazy custom. Their handkerchiefs of coarse red, blue, green or yellow bandana were, for greater convenience in hot weather, knotted at the ends and thrown shawlwise around the shoulders. Against a background of olive foliage the effect was always striking and kaleidoscopic. The soft felt hat was their only head covering. A tall hat on anybody but a clergyman or gambler would have justified a blow.

They were, to a man, singularly handsome. Not solely in the muscular development and antique grace acquired through open-air exercise and unrestrained freedom of limb, but often in colour, expression, and even softness of outline. They were mainly young men whose beards were virgin, soft, silken, and curling. They had not always time to cut their hair, and this often swept their shoulders with the love-locks of the Stuart Kings of England and bygone sovereigns of France. There were faces Bret Harte has declared in later years that made him think of De La Roche's Saviour, and dashing figures, bold-eyed, jauntily insolent, and carelessly reckless, that would have delighted Meissonier.

Added to this, the foreign element of Spaniards and Mexicans produced a combination of light and colour unknown to any other modern English-speaking community.

Long after he had left these wild but fascinating scenes, he loved to recall how at sunset, on the red mountain road, a Mexican pack train would slowly wind its way towards the plain. Each animal wore a gaily-coloured blanket beneath its pack-saddle, the leading mule was musical with bells and brightly caparisoned, the muleteers wore the national dress with striped serapé of red and black, deer-skin trousers open from the knee and fringed with buttons, and had on each heel a silver spur with rowels three inches in diameter.

If the Argonauts were thus picturesque in their external appearance, associates, and environment, no less romantic were they in expression and character. Their hospitality was barbaric, their generosity spontaneous. Their appreciation of merit always took the form of a pecuniary testimonial, whether it was a church and parsonage given to a favourite preacher, or the shower of gold they rained upon the pretty person of a popular actress. No mendicant had to beg; a sympathising bystander took up a subscription in his hat. Their generosity was emulative and cumulative, and speaking of later days than those of which I am now writing, Bret Harte recalled the curious but interesting fact that during the great war of the Rebellion the millions gathered in the Treasury of the Sanitary Commission had their source in a San Francisco *bar room!*

"It's mighty rough on those chaps who are wounded," said a casual drinker, "and I'm sorry for them."

"How much are you sorry?" asked a gambler.

"Five hundred dollars," said the first speaker aggressively.

"I'll see that five hundred dollars and go a thousand better," said the gambler, putting down the money.

In half-an-hour *fifteen thousand dollars* was the amount telegraphed to Washington from San Francisco, and this great National Charity, open to North and South—afterwards reinforced by three millions of California gold—sprang into life.

In their apparently thoughtless free-handedness there was often a vein of practical sagacity. After the great fire in Sacramento, the first subscription to the rebuilding of the Methodist Church came from the hands of a noted gambler. The good pastor, while accepting the gift, could not help asking the giver why he did not keep the money to build another gambling house.

"It would be making things a little *monotonous* out yer, old man," responded the gambler gravely, "and it's *variety* that's wanted for a big town."

As Bret Harte saw them the Argonauts were splendidly loyal in their friendships. Perhaps, he thought, the absence of feminine society and domestic ties turned the current of their tenderness and sentiment towards each other.

To be a man's "partner" signified something more than a common pecuniary or business interest; it was to be his "friend" through good or ill report, in adversity or in fortune, to cleave to him and none other—to be even jealous of him!

There were Argonauts who were, probably, more faithful to their partners than they had ever been to their wives; there were partners whom even the grave could not divide—who remained solitary and loyal to a dead man's memory. To insult a man's partner was to insult him; to step between two partners in a quarrel was attended with the same danger and uncertainty that involves the peacemaker in a conjugal dispute.

The heroic qualities of a Damon and Pythias were always present; there were men who had fulfilled all those conditions, and, better still, without a knowledge or belief that they were classical, with no mythology to lean their backs against, and hardly a conscious appreciation of a later faith that is symbolised by sacrifice. In these unions there were the same odd combinations often seen in the marital relations; a tall and a short man, a delicate, sickly youth and a middle-aged man of powerful frame, a grave reticent nature and a spontaneous exuberant one.

"My pardner left me the other day," said a disconsolate Mississippean. "My pardner left me, and has took up with a shiny Yankee at Gold Hill. Well," he added with a heartfelt sigh, "I might have reckoned on it; he was allez *fickle* and fond o' jewelry and dress!"

Yet in spite of these incongruities there was always the same blind unreasoning fidelity to each other. It is true that their zeal sometimes outran their discretion. There was a story in those days of a San Francisco stranger who, while indulging in some free criticism of religious demonstrations, suddenly found himself sprawling upon the floor with an irate Kentuckian, revolver in hand, standing over him. When an explanation was demanded by the crowd, the Kentuckian pensively returned his revolver to his belt. "Well," he said, "*I* ain't got anythin' agin the stranger, but he said suthin' a minute ago agin Quakers, and I want him to understand that my *pardner* is a Quaker, and—a—a *peaceful* man"!

Their domestic life was of course rugged. Women were few, and the family hearthstones and domestic altars still more rare. Of housewifely virtues the utmost was made; the model spouse invariably kept a boarding-house and served her husband's guests. In out-of-the-way cases the woman who was a crown to her husband took in washing also.

Bret Harte remembered a woman of this class who lived in a little mining camp in the Sierras. Her husband was a Texan—a good-humoured giant, who had the respect of the camp perhaps quite as much by his amiable weakness as his great physical power. She was an Eastern woman—had been a schoolmistress, and had lived in cities up to the time of her marriage and emigration. She was not, perhaps, personally attractive; she was plain and worn beyond her years, and her few personal accomplishments—a slight knowledge of French and Italian, music, and Latin classification of plants, natural philosophy, and Blair's Rhetoric—did not tell upon the masculine inhabitants of Ringtail Cañon. Yet she was universally loved, and Aunt Ruth, as she was called, or old Ma'am Richards, was lifted into an idealisation of the aunt, mother, or sister of every miner in the camp. She reciprocated in a thousand ways—mending the clothes, ministering to the sick, and even answering the long home letters of the men.

Presently she fell sick. Nobody knew exactly what was the matter with her, but she pined slowly away. When the burden of her household tasks was lifted from her shoulders, she took to long walks, wandering over the hills, and was often seen upon the highest ridge at sunset looking towards the East. Here one day she was found senseless, the result, it was said, of over-exertion, and she was warned to keep in the house. So she kept her house, and even went so far as to keep her bed. One day, to everybody's astonishment, she died. "Do you know what they say Ma'am Richards died of?" said Yuba Bill to his partner. "No," was the reply. "The doctor says she died of nostalgia," said Bill. "What blank thing is nostalgia?" asked the other. "Well," Bill answered, "it's a kind of longing to go to Heaven." "Perhaps," said Bret Harte in telling this story, "perhaps he was right."

He found that the Argonauts were not, as a rule, overburdened with sentiment, and were utterly free from its more dangerous ally, sentimentalism. They took a sardonic delight in stripping all meretricious finery from their speech; they had a sarcastic fashion of eliminating everything but the facts from poetic or imaginative narration. With all that terrible directness of statement which was habitual to them when they indulged in innuendo, it was significantly cruel and striking.

In the early days Lynch law punished horse-stealing with death. A man one day was arrested and tried for this offence. After hearing the evidence the jury duly retired to consult upon their verdict. Perhaps from an insufficiency of proof, perhaps from motives of humanity, perhaps because the case was showing an alarming decrease in the male population, but for some reason the jury showed signs of hesitation. The crowd outside became impatient. After waiting an hour, the ringleader put his head into the jury-room and asked if they had settled upon a verdict. "No," said the foreman. "Well," answered the leader, "take your own time, gentlemen; only remember that we're waitin' for this yer room to lay out the corpse in"!

Their humour was frequent, although never exuberant or spontaneous, and always contained a certain percentage of rude justice or morality under its sardonic exterior. The only ethical teaching of those days was through a joke or a sarcasm. While camps were moved by an epigram, the rude equity of Judge Lynch was swayed by a witticism. Even their pathos, which was more or less dramatic, partook of this quality. The odd expression, the quaint fancy, or even grotesque gesture that rippled the surface consciousness with a smile, a moment later touched the depths of the heart with a sense of infinite sadness.

They indulged sparingly in poetry or illustration, using only its rude inchoate form of slang. Unlike the meaningless catch-words of an older and more indolent civilisation, their slang was the condensed epigrammatic illustration of some fact, fancy, or perception. Generally it had some significant local derivation. The half-yearly drought brought forward the popular adjuration "dry up" to express the natural climax of evaporated fluency. "Played out" was a reminiscence of the gambling table, and expressed that hopeless condition of affairs where even the operation of chance is suspended. "To take stock" in any statement, theory, or suggestion, indicated a pecuniary degree of trustful credulity.

Even though it came from a gambler's lips one can hardly call that slang which gives such a vivid picture of the reckoning hereafter as is to be found conveyed in the expression, "handing in your checks." Bret Harte remembered how Thomas Starr King, a great preacher, under whose influence, as we shall presently see, he in later years became inwrapt, after delivering a controversial sermon one Sunday, overheard the following dialogue between a parishioner and his friend: "Well," said the enthusiastic parishioner, referring to the sermon, "what do you think of King now?" "Think of him!" responded the friend, "why, he took every trick!"

Indeed, in those days slang was universal, and there was no occasion to which it seemed inconsistent.

Sometimes through the national habit of amusing exaggeration, or equally grotesque understatement, certain words acquired a new significance. Bret

Harte recalled a night he spent at a new hotel. After he had got comfortably to bed, he was aroused by the noise of scuffling and shouting, punctuated by occasional pistol shots from below. In the morning he made his way to the bar room, and found the landlord behind the bar, with a bruised eye, a piece of court-plaster extending from his cheek to his forehead, yet withal a pleasant smile upon his face. Taking his cue from this, he said to him—"Well, landlord, you had rather a lively time here last night." "Yes," he replied pleasantly, "it *was* rather a lively time!" "Do you often have such lively times about here?" he asked, emboldened by his cheerfulness. "Well, no," he said reflectively; "the fact is we've only *just opened yer*, and last night was about the *first time* that the boys seemed to be gittin' *really acquainted!*"

Then there was a man who objected to join in a bear hunt because "he hadn't *lost* any bears lately;" and the man who replied to a tourist's question, "If they grew any corn in that locality," by saying: "Not a d—d bit; in fact *scarcely any!*" Such things offer easy examples of this characteristic anti-climax and exaggeration. Often a flavour of gentle philosophy mingled with it. "In course I'd *rather not* drive a mule team," said a teamster one day to the youthful Bret Harte. "In course I'd rather run a bank or be President; but when you've lived as long as I have, stranger, you'll find that in this yer world a man don't always get his right place."

Often a man's trade or occupation lent a graphic power to his speech. An engineer was one day relating to him the particulars of a fellow-workman's death by consumption. "Poor Jim," he said, "he got to runnin' slower and slower until one day he stopped on his centre."

"What a picture!" said Bret Harte, as in after years he quoted this incident; "what a picture of the helpless hitch in this weary human machine."

Sometimes the expression was borrowed from another profession. One day there was a difficulty in a surveyor's camp between the surveyor and a Chinaman. "If I were you," said a sympathising teamster to the surveyor, "I'd just take that chap and theodolite him out o' camp."

Sometimes the slang was a mere echo of the formulas of some popular excitement or movement. During a camp meeting in the mountains a teamster who had been swearing at his cattle was rebuked for his impiety by a young woman who had just returned from the meeting. "Why, Miss," said the astonished teamster, "you don't call that swearing, do you? Why, you ought to hear Bill Jones *exhort* the *impenitent* mule!"

"But," said Bret Harte, "can we entirely forgive the Argonaut for making his slang gratuitously permanent? for foisting upon posterity, who may forget these extenuating circumstances, such titles as 'One Horse Gulch,' 'Greaser Cañon,' 'Fiddletown,' 'Murderer's Bar,' and 'Dead Broke.' The map of California is still ghastly with this unhallowed christening.[1] A tourist may well hesitate to write 'Dead Broke' at the top of his letter, and any stranger would be justified in declining an invitation to 'Murderer's Bar.' It seemed as if the early Californian took a sardonic delight in the contrast these names offered to the euphony of the old Spanish titles. With few exceptions the counties of the State still bear the soft Castilian labials and gentle vowels—Tuolumne, Tulare, Tolo, Calaveras, Siskiyou, and Mendocino; to say nothing of the glorious company of the apostles who perpetually praise California throughout the Spanish Catholic calendar. Yet wherever a saint dropped a blessing, some sinner afterwards squatted with an epithet. Extremes often met. The omnibuses in San Francisco used to run from the Happy Valley to the Mission Dolores. You had to go to Blaises first before you could get to Purissima. Yet I think the ferocious directness of these titles was preferable to the pinchbeck elegance of Copperpolis, Argenticia, the polyglot monstrosities of Ore-ville and Placer-ville, or the remarkable sentiment of Romeosburgh and Julietstown. I wish I could say that the Spaniard fared any better than his language at the hands of the Argonauts. He was called a 'Greaser,' an unctuous reminiscence of the Mexican war, and applied erroneously to the Spanish Californian who was not a Mexican. The pure blood of Castile ran in his veins. He held his lands sometimes by Royal Patent of

---

[1] Twenty-two years have elapsed since Bret Harte uttered these words. Possibly some of these too suggestive names are now changed.

Charles V. He was grave, simple, and confiding. He accepted the Argonaut's irony as sincere, he permitted him to squat on his lands, he allowed him to marry his daughter. He found himself in a few years laughed at, landless, and alone. In his sore extremity he entered into a defensive alliance with some of his persecutors, and revenged himself after an extraordinary fashion. In all matters relating to early land grants his was the only available memory, his the only legal testimony on the court. Perhaps strengthened by this repeated exercise, his memory became one of the most extraordinary, his testimony the most complete and corroborative known to human experience. He recalled conversations, official orders, and precedents of fifty years ago as if they were matters of yesterday. He produced grants, signatures, and letters with promptitude and despatch. He evolved evidence from his inner consciousness, and in less than three years Spanish land titles were lost in hopeless confusion and a cloud of witnesses. The wily Argonauts cursed the aptness of their pupil.

"Socially he clung to his old customs. He had his regular fandango, strummed his guitar, and danced the cachuca and kindred dances of his nation. He had his Sunday bullfights after Mass. But the wily Greek Argonaut introduced breakdowns in the fandango, substituted the banjo for the guitar, and Bourbon whisky for Aguardiente. He even went so far as to interfere with his bullfights, not so much from a sense of moral ethics as with the view of giving the bull a show. He substituted on one or two occasions a grizzly bear, who not only instantly cleared the arena, but playfully wiped out the first two rows of benches beyond.

"He learned horsemanship from the Spaniard and ran off with his cattle!"

When Bret Harte first joined the Argonauts he tried his luck at gold finding, and for a time pluckily worked side by side with his quaint but picturesque comrades. He prospected, shovelled, picked, washed, and all the rest of it, and so far mastered his trade that he was able to describe all its processes with minute accuracy. But it was not likely that this class of work would suit him, and, having gained his experience, and satisfied his curiosity, he discarded his mining tools and became a messenger in the employ of the Adams Express Company. His business was to sit beside the drivers of the stage coaches and to guard the gold, greenbacks, and letters which the Company undertook to deliver from the camp miners to the banks, or to their friends in the nearest towns. Considering that stage robberies were the order of the day, this experience was not only an exciting but a perilous one. To it, however, we are indebted for his wonderful descriptions of the dangerous stage roads, down the steep grades of which six horses would be driven by an unfaltering hand at a pace so terrific, that the passengers had to cling desperately to the terribly swaying coach as it thundered along, and try to keep their equilibrium.

To them, moreover, we owe the inimitably drawn character of Yuba Bill, the most fearless and grimly humorous of stage coachmen—one of the finest in the rich gallery of Bret Harte's portraits. To describe the sort of thing that the Expressman, as he was called, had to endure, I may quote from one of his stories.

Yuba Bill has been warned that, at a particularly dangerous portion of the road, a tree has fallen across the track (this was no uncommon danger), and to his intense annoyance the coach has been kept standing while he, his assistants, and some of his passengers went forward to remove the obstacle. This having been achieved, Bill returned, gathered up the reins, and in five minutes the scene of former obstruction was reached.

"The great pine tree which had fallen from the steep bank above and stretched across the road had been partly lopped of its branches, divided in two lengths, which were now rolled to either side of the track, leaving barely space for the coach to pass. The huge vehicle 'slowed up' as Yuba Bill skilfully guided his six horses through this narrow alley, whose tassels of pine, glistening with wet, brushed the panels and sides of the coach, and effectually excluded any view from its windows. Seen from the coach top, the horses appeared to be cleaving their way through a dark, shining olive sea, that parted before and closed behind them, as they slowly passed. The leaders were just emerging from it, and Bill was gathering up his slackened reins, when a peremptory voice called, 'Halt!' At the same moment the coach lights flashed upon a masked and motionless horse-man in the road. Bill made an impulsive reach for his whip, but in the same instant checked himself, reined in his horses with a suppressed oath, and sat perfectly rigid. Not so the Expressman, who caught up his rifle, but it was arrested by Bill's arm, and his voice in his ear—

"'Too late—we're covered! Don't be a d—d fool!'

"The inside passengers, still encompassed by obscurity, knew only that the stage had stopped. The 'outsiders' knew, by experience, that they were covered by unseen guns in the wayside branches, and scarcely moved.

"'I didn't think it was the square thing to stop you, Bill, till you had got through your work,' said a masterful but not unpleasant voice, 'and if you'll just hand down the express box, I'll pass you and the rest of your load through free! But as we're both in a hurry, you'd better look lively about it.'

"'Hand it down,' said Bill gruffly to the Expressman.

"The Expressman turned with a white cheek but blazing eyes to the compartment below his seat, brought out the box, and handed it to another armed and masked figure who appeared mysteriously from the branches beside the wheels.

"'Thank you,' said the voice; 'you can slide on now.'

"'And thank you for nothing,' said Bill, gathering up his reins. 'It's the first time any of your kind had to throw down a tree to hold me up!'

"'You're lying, Bill—though you don't know it,' said the voice cheerfully. 'Far from throwing down a tree to stop you, it was I who sent word along the road to warn you from crashing down upon it, and sending you and your load to h—l before your time. Drive on!'"

There was a politeness, a certain feeling of chivalry, and an unerring sense of humour about these Californian highwaymen—or road-agents as they called themselves and were called by others—that makes them even more interesting than the dare-devil Dick Turpins and courtly Claude Du Vals of another country and an earlier period. Moreover, they were not rapacious in their robberies; if they got what they wanted they would let all else go scot-free.

Bret Harte recalled an instance of a coach being "held up" because the leader of a gang of road-agents was in search of a parcel of greenbacks which had been fraudulently obtained from one of his friends. The usual thing took place. Before there was time to touch a weapon the rifle-covered coach was brought to an abrupt standstill. The unlucky Expressman's box was handed down and searched, and this proving unsatisfactory all the passengers were ordered to alight and stand in an undignified row, "holding up their hands" as evidence that they felt themselves at the mercy of their assailants.

Then, addressing them, the intrepid but urbane agent said—

"'Thank you! Gentlemen, one of you has a package of greenbacks; I want that package. I don't want' (turning to one of his victims) 'the gold dust concealed in the hollow sole of your boot, though it seems to impede your movements. I don't' (to another) 'want the coin you have filled up your pistol holster with, though you've sacrificed your pistol for it; I only want the package of greenbacks that' (to others) 'seems to lie between you two men.'"

Without a murmur the packet was handed over, and then he coolly said—

"'Thanks. Bill' (to the driver)—'wait here until you hear my whistle. Raise so much as a rein or whip-lash until that signal, and you know what'll happen! Now, gentlemen' (to the passengers), 'you will not be detained here a second longer than I can help. I wish you a good-night, and a swift journey.'"

At this moment one of his angry row of "held up" men, less used to this humiliating method of treatment than his comrades, said impetuously, "'But I should like to say—.' The reply was in a stern voice, 'Say what you like when I am gone.'

"'Then I hope you'll be within earshot,' said the irate passenger.

"'No! but within rifle-shot,' was the grim response; 'and your driver knows it!' And then with a cheery 'Good-night!' he vanished into the darkness.

"'A clean job,' said Bill laconically. 'They'll cover us till the other man gets off with the treasure.'

"'Yes,' said the gentleman with the gold dust in the sole of his boot, 'I guess the leader comes from up country. He seemed to throw in a few fancy touches, particularly in that 'Good-night.' Sorter chucked a little sentiment in it. Didn't seem to be the same thing ez 'Git yer d—d suckers,' on the other line."

Thus calmly were these bold robberies committed and received, and such were the episodes carefully noted by the young Expressman, who in after days told many droll stories of the ways in which the passengers would endeavour to conceal their cherished gold about their persons.

But while he was thus roughing it in the mining camps and on stage-coaches, Bret Harte did not forget what was due to himself and the home of his boyhood. At one of the old Spanish missions he made friends with a kindly and erudite priest, and as often as possible was his eager pupil. We all know how what may be called the "Spanish motive" runs gracefully and melodiously through his stories and poems, and, indeed, forms the main theme of some of his most powerful work. Probably we all like his strongly marked Californian mining characters the best; but many of us have a warm place in our hearts for the gentle surroundings and peaceful life of the old missions, redolent as they are with the fragrance of romance. Bret Harte often spoke gratefully of the help he received from his priestly tutor. After a while he gave up his appointment with the Adams Express Company and became an assistant in a drug store, or chemist's shop. Of course this did not last long, but he must have picked up a great deal of knowledge, for to the end of his days he could speak with authority as to the virtues and properties of medicines. I have heard English physicians express wonder at his grasp of the subject.

These dispensing days peep out in many of his stories. I am quite sure that he had himself in mind when he described how the junior partner of the firm of Sparlow & Kane, "Druggists and Apothecaries" of San Francisco, was left in charge of the surgery and its adjuncts.

"He felt drowsy; the mysterious incense of the shop, that combined essence of drugs, spice, scented soap, and orris-root—which always reminded him of the Arabian Nights—was affecting him. He yawned, and then, turning away, passed behind the counter, took down a jar labelled 'Glycyr. Glabra,' selected a piece of Spanish liquorice and meditatively sucked it. Not receiving from it that diversion and sustenance he apparently was seeking, he also visited, in an equally familiar manner, a jar marked 'Jujubes,' and returned ruminatingly to his previous position.

"If I have not," he goes on to say, "in this incident sufficiently established the youthfulness of the junior partner, I may briefly add that he was just nineteen, that he had early joined the emigration to California, and after one or two previous light-hearted essays at other occupations, for which he was singularly unfitted, he had saved enough to embark on his present venture, still less suited to his temperament. In those adventurous days, trades and vocations were not always filled by trained workmen; it was extremely probable that the experienced chemist was already making his way as a gold-miner, with a lawyer and a physician for his partners, and Mr. Kane's inexperienced position was by no means an uncommon one. A slight knowledge of Latin as a written language, an American schoolboy's acquaintance with chemistry and natural philosophy, were deemed sufficient by his partner, a regular physician, for practical co-operation in the vending of drugs and putting up of prescriptions. He knew the difference between acids and alkalies and the peculiar results which attended their incautious combination. But he was excessively deliberate, painstaking, and cautious. The legend which adorned the desk at the counter, 'Physicians' prescriptions carefully prepared,' was more than usually true as regards the adverb. There was no danger of his poisoning anybody through haste or carelessness, but it was possible that an urgent 'case' might have succumbed to the disease while he was putting up the remedy. Nor was his precaution entirely passive. In those days the 'heroic' practice of medicine was in keeping with the abnormal development of the country; there were 'record' doses of calomel and quinine, and he had once or twice incurred the fury of local practitioners by sending back their prescriptions with a modest query."

No doubt, as young Kane, Bret Harte drew himself as he worked in the drug store. Possibly he was not quite so careful as that youthful practitioner. He once told me that he very nearly killed an invalid by making a blunder with his prescription, and as a matter of consequence got into great trouble. This gave him a distaste for practical pharmacy, but the whole subject greatly interested him. In one of his later stories he described with infinite pains, and a grasp of his subject on which he prided himself, how a plain-faced Califórnian girl, who had lost the track of her father's waggon, wandered away into the woods, and, having in all ignorance discovered an arsenical spring, and frequently bathed in it, became one of the most beautiful of women.

Then he tried his hand as a printer. He learned to set type, and assisted in the publication of the necessary local newspaper. Here, again, he relates a personal experience: "'Well!' said the editor of the *Mountain Clarion*, looking up impatiently from his copy, 'what's the matter now?'

"The intruder in his sanctum was his foreman. He was also acting as pressman, as might be seen from his shirt-sleeves, spattered with ink, rolled up over the arm that had just been working 'the Archimedean lever that moves the world,' which was the editor's favourite allusion to the handpress that strict economy obliged the *Clarion* to use. His braces, slipped from his shoulders during his work, were looped negligently on either side, their functions being replaced by one hand which occasionally hitched up his trousers to a securer position. A pair of down-at-heel slippers—dear to the country printer—completed his *négligé*."

The world at large did not know how he was enabled to etch in his characters with such minute precision and firmness of touch; but to an old friend, sitting and chatting alone with him, he loved to speak of these things as his personal experiences and to laugh over his recollections.

At the editors of such papers as the *Mountain Clarion*, their frothy style and their efforts to retain the support of all classes of their patrons, he loved to deal sly and humorous little hits—as, for example, in "The Iliad of Sandy Bar," where he records—"I have before me a copy of the *Poverty Flat Pioneer*, in which the editor, under the head of 'County Improvements,' says: 'The New Presbyterian Church on C Street at Sandy Bar is completed. It stands upon the lot formerly occupied by the Magnolia Saloon, which was so mysteriously burnt last month. The temple, which now rises like a Phœnix from the ashes of the Magnolia, is virtually the free gift of H. J. York, Esq., of Sandy Bar, who purchased the lot and donated the lumber. Other buildings are going up in the vicinity, but the most noticeable is the 'Sunny South Saloon,' erected by Captain Mat. Scott, nearly opposite the church. Captain Scott has spared no expense in the furnishing of this saloon, which promises to be one of the most agreeable places of resort in old Tuolumne. He has recently imported two new first-class billiard tables with cork cushions. Our old friend 'Mountain Jimmy' will dispense liquors at the bar. We refer our readers to the advertisement in another column. Visitors to Sandy Bar cannot do better than give 'Jimmy' a call." Among the local items occurred the following: "H. J. York, Esq., of Sandy Bar, has offered a reward of one hundred dollars for the detection of the parties who hauled away the steps of the new Presbyterian Church, C Street, Sandy Bar, during divine service on Sabbath evening last. Captain Scott adds another hundred for the capture of the miscreants who broke the magnificent plate-glass windows of the new saloon on the following evening. There is some talk of reorganising the old Vigilance Committee at Sandy Bar."

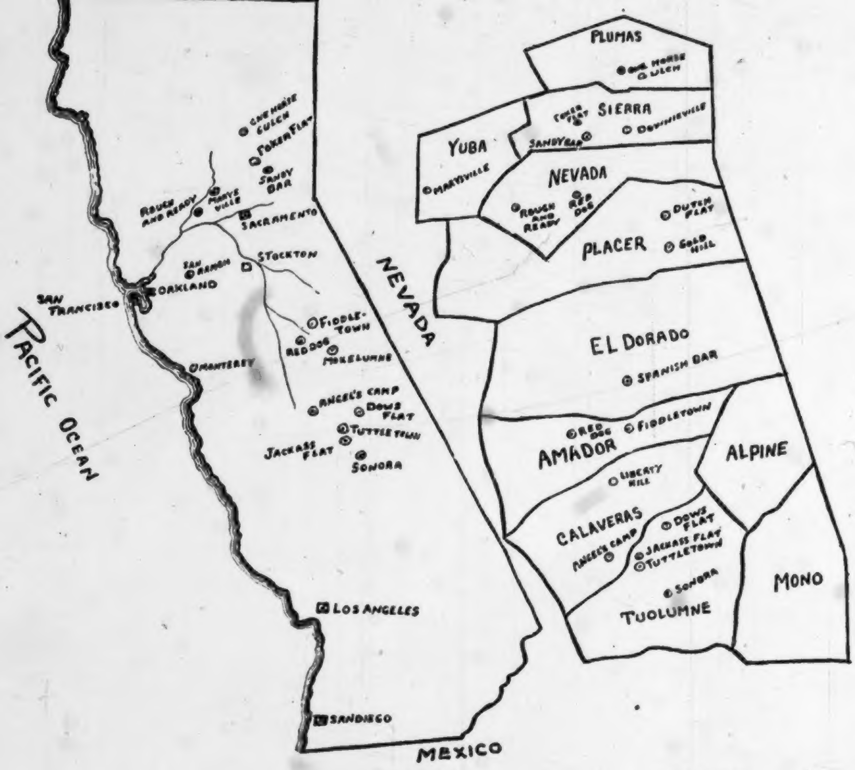
This placid blending of "County Improvements," and consequent "Local Items," is delicious.

Having mastered the art of printing, and gleaned some useful information as to editorial tactics, Bret Harte became a schoolmaster, and no doubt among his pupils (he has mentioned many of them) were the immortal Mliss and the fascinating Cressy.

In his works he faithfully depicts himself as the conscientious young tutor trying to impress upon listless ears the lessons that they loathed. It is a pathetic little sketch of the poor "Master" sitting at his uncongenial task in the primitive little schoolroom at "Smith's Pocket" with some open copy-books before him, carefully making those bold and full characters which are supposed to combine the extremes of chirographical and moral excellence; and who had got so far as "Riches are Deceitful," and was elaborating the noun with an insincerity of flourish that was quite in the spirit of his text, when he heard a gentle tapping at the door. His interrupter was sweet Mliss, and then, as if by the wave of a magician's wand, the dreariness of the uninviting schoolhouse vanishes.

Again he conjures up a primitive "academy," which he entered with "a certain precaution begotten of his experience in once finding a small but sociable rattlesnake coiled up near the threshold. A slight disturbance which followed his intrusion showed the value of that precaution and the fact that the room had already been used for various private and peaceful gatherings of animated nature. An irregular attendance of yellow birds and squirrels dismissed themselves hurriedly through the broken floor and windows, but a golden lizard, stiffened suddenly into stony fright on the edge of an open arithmetic, touched the heart of the master so strongly by its resemblance to some kept-in and forgotten scholar who had succumbed over the task he could not accomplish, that he was seized with compunction."

And then the description of the weary, dreary school time which "continued for two hours with short sighs, corrugations of small foreheads, the complaining cries and scratching of slate-pencils over slates, and other signs of minor anguish among the more youthful of the flock; and with more or less whisperings, movements of the lips, and unconscious soliloquy among the older pupils. The master moved slowly up and down the aisle with a word of explanation or encouragement here and there, stopping with his hands behind him to gaze abstractedly out of the windows, to the wondering envy of the little ones. A faint hum, as of invisible insects, gradually pervaded the school; the more persistent droning of a large bee had become dangerously soporific. The hot breath of the pines without had invaded the doors and windows;


PACIFIC OCEAN
SAN FRANCISCO
OAKLAND
SAN RAMON
ROUGH AND READY
MARYSVILLE
ONE HORSE GULCH
POKER FLAT
SANDY BAR
SACRAMENTO
STOCKTON
MONTEREY
FIDDLE-TOWN
RED DOG
MOKELUMNE
ANGEL'S CAMP
DOWS FLAT
TUTTLETOWN
JACKASS FLAT
SONORA
NEVADA
LOS ANGELES
SANDIEGO
MEXICO
PLUMAS
ONE HORSE GULCH
SIERRA
POKER FLAT
SANDY BAR
DOWNIEVILLE
YUBA
MARYSVILLE
NEVADA
ROUGH AND READY
RED DOG
PLACER
DUTCH FLAT
GOLD HILL
EL DORADO
SPANISH BAR
AMADOR
RED DOG
FIDDLETOWN
ALPINE
LIBERTY HILL
CALAVERAS
ANGEL'S CAMP
DOWS FLAT
JACKASS FLAT
TUTTLETOWN
SONORA
TUOLUMNE
MONO

STATE MAP.

COUNTY MAP.

Map of Bret Harte's California.

[*To face p.* 64.

the warped shingles and weather-boarding at times creaked and snapped under the rays of the vertical and unclouded sun. A gentle perspiration broke out like a mild epidemic in the infant class; little curls became damp, long lashes limp, round eyes moist, and small eyelids heavy."

Poor young schoolmaster! One does not like to think of his talents being squandered on such work as this; and one sympathises with him when, relating another of these experiences, he says: "The little pioneer settlement school, of which I was the somewhat youthful and, I fear, the not over competent master, was State-aided only to a limited extent; and as the bulk of the expense was borne by a few families in its vicinity, when two of them—representing perhaps a dozen children or pupils—one morning announced their intention of moving to a more prosperous and newer district, the school was incontinently closed. In twenty-four hours I found myself destitute alike of my flock and my vocation. I am afraid I regretted the former the most. Some of the children I had made my companions and friends; and as I stood that bright May morning before the empty little bark-thatched schoolhouse in the wilderness, it was with an odd sensation that our little summer 'play' at being schoolmaster and pupil was over. Indeed, I remember distinctly that a large hunk of gingerbread —a parting gift from a prize scholar a year older than myself—stood me in good stead in my future wanderings, for I was alone in the world at that moment, and constitutionally improvident."

But to these somewhat sordid scholastic days we owe some of his brightest and most charming characters. It was always the same with him. Wherever he went or whatever he did, he always—and no doubt at that early period of his life, unconsciously—stored away golden material for use in the years to come. He gathered in his Californian harvest quickly, but its rich grain was abundant and never failed him.

There were soldiering days, too. In the warfare with the Indians he fought through two campaigns to a staff appointment, and I may as well mention here as elsewhere that when the American Civil War broke out he joined the Volunteer City Guard of San Francisco, as a reservist. He was always ready to serve his country, and was rather proud of his diploma of Colonel in the Army of the Potomac. His experiences with the Indians have been fully utilised in his glowing pages, and he has left us sketches as vivid and striking as that of Washington Irving's "Philip of Pokanoket." Notably there is a weird study of Indian life in his fine story, "The Ancestors of Peter Atherley." But his wandering days came to an early end, and he was still quite a young man when he returned to San Francisco determined to settle down to some definite calling. He had learnt the truth of John Stuart Mill's words: "Human existence is girt round with mystery; the narrow region of our experience is a small island in the midst of a boundless sea." But the "island" he had explored was, in more senses than one, full of precious things, and he must have been conscious that he was bringing some of them home with him, even if he had not yet made up his mind how to use them. Truly his old and devoted friend, Mr. Charles Warren Stoddard, said :—

"It was a lucky fate that drove Bret Harte afield when he was all eyes, when his wits were wide-awake, and he had a healthy, youthful thirst for adventure. He bore a charmed life. Probably his youth was his salvation, for he ran a thousand risks, yet seemed only to gain in health and spirits ; and all the while he was unconsciously accumulating the most valuable material that could fall to the lot of a writer—the lights and shadows, the colour, the details of a life unique, as brief as it was brilliant, and one never to be lived again under the sun or stars."

California, Mr. Stoddard tells us, was picturesque once upon a time; the life there and then was delightful, audacious, perhaps at times devilish; there was not much repose in camp or town, but there was enough and to spare in the wide verandahs of the sun-backed haciendas and in the attenuated vistas of the mission cloisters.

But Bret Harte was weary of it all. He was, indeed, "glutted with adventurous experiences." His mind was full of all that he had seen among miners, Spaniards, express coachmen, road-agents, gamblers, Chinese, and their bewildering surroundings. For some time he had been fascinated with them, but the day came when he longed for a home.

CHAPTER III

IN LIFE'S STREAM: "SWIMMING"

ADVISEDLY, if somewhat fantastically, I have labelled my three opening chapters. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, of whose work it need hardly be said Bret Harte was an ardent admirer, once asked him if he found the writing of verse come easily to him. Bret Harte, who was fond of telling this story to his friends, said, that the opening lines often gave him sore trouble, but when they had been composed the rest of the task seemed an easy one. "That's it," said Holmes, with a fellow-feeling for a brother poet; "we flounder and struggle about in the stream for a time, and then, when we are not looking for it, a wave comes up from behind, takes us off our feet, and then we swim."

Now it seems to me that this applies to Bret Harte's life. He had floundered, he had struggled, and now, with a strong, unerring stroke, he was to swim.

"Try thyself unweariedly till thou findest the highest thing thou art capable of doing, faculties and outward circumstances both duly considered, and then *do* it."

Some such thoughts as these must have been in Bret Harte's mind when, with the full memory of his printing experiences in view, he returned to San Francisco and sought employment.

Here Mr. Charles Warren Stoddard very kindly permits me to let him take up the tale.

"The vicissitudes of Bret Harte," he says, "were destined to become his stock-in-trade, and when he somehow drifted into the composing-room of the once famous paper, *The Golden Era*, he naturally began to contribute to its columns. *The Golden Era* was the cradle and the grave of many a high hope—there was nothing to be compared with it that side of the Mississippi; and though it could point with pride—it never failed to do so—to a somewhat notable list of contributors, it had always the fine air of the amateur, and was most complacently patronising. The very pattern of paternal patronage was amiable Joe Lawrence, its editor. He was an inveterate pipe-smoker, a pillar of cloud as he sat in his editorial chair, first floor front, on the south side of Clay Street, below Montgomery; an air of literary mystery enveloped him. He spoke as an oracle, and I remember his calling my attention to a certain anonymous contribution, just received, and nodding his head prophetically, for he already had his eye on its fledgeling author, a young compositor on the floor above. It was Bret Harte's first appearance in *The Golden Era*, and doubtless Lawrence encouraged him as he had encouraged me when, out of the mist about him, he handed me, secretly, and with a glance of caution—for his business partner, the marble-hearted, sat at his ledger not far away—he handed me a folded paper on which he had written this startling legend: 'Write some prose for *The Golden Era* and I will give you a dollar a column.' I had not yet outgrown a bad habit of verse-making, had never been paid a farthing for anything I had published, and the brightening prospect dazzled and confused me.

"Before Bret Harte ceased to write for *The Golden Era* he had gained sufficient self-confidence to sign his contributions 'B.' or 'Bret.' 'Mliss' was first printed in those columns, and Joe Lawrence was filled with Olympian laughter when he exhibited a handsome specially-designed woodcut heading, which he had ordered for that charming tale. Mark Twain and Prentice Mulford became known through the columns of *The Golden Era*. Joaquin Miller wrote for it from the backwood depths of his youthful obscurity."

But during those early days of authorship Bret Harte did more than this. He fell in love and got married. The lady was Miss Anna Griswold, and in the days of his courtship he was wont, in humorous fashion, to drop into poetry, as witness the following:

SERENADE

(*Adapted to the latitude of San Francisco*).

"O list, lady, list! while thy lover outside
Pours forth those fond accents that thrill thee;
O list! both thy doors and thy windows beside
For fear that some thorough draught chill thee.
The 'sweet summer morn's' hanging low in the sky,
And the fog's drifting wildly around me;
There is damp in my throat, there is sand in my eye,
And my old friend Neuralgia has found me.

O list, lady, list! ere this thin-searching mist
Subdues all my amorous frenzy;
The Pleiads' 'soft influence' here is, I wist,
Replaced by the harsh influenza;
And now, lady sweet, I must bid thee 'good-night,'
A night that would quench Hymen's torch, love,
For a lute by the fire is much more polite,
Than a song and catarrh in the porch, love."

The marriage took place at San Rafael, on August 11th, 1862, the officiating minister being the Rev. Harry Gilbert of the Methodist Church.

Following his usual plan, Bret Harte, notwithstanding the encouragement that had been given him by the editor of *The Golden Era*, did not mean to depend only on his pen. When he first met his wife he was in the General Surveyor's Office of San Francisco, and later he was to receive a more important appointment. No doubt it was the knowledge that he had these second strings to his bow that made him feel justified in marrying.

In those first boyish impressions of California to which I have alluded in these pages he said: "I recall another incident connected with the building[1] equally characteristic of the period. The United States Branch Mint stood very near it, and its tall, factory-like chimneys overshadowed my cousin's roof. Some scandal had arisen from an illegal leakage of gold in the manipulation of that metal during the various processes of smelting and refining. One of the excuses offered was the volatilisation of the precious metal and its escape through the draft of the tall chimneys. All San Francisco laughed at this explanation until it learned that a corroboration of the theory had been established by an assay of the dust and grime of the roofs in the vicinity of the Mint. These had yielded distinct traces of gold. San Francisco stopped laughing, and that portion of it which had roofs in the neighbourhood at once began prospecting. Claims were staked out on these airy placers (diggings), and my cousin's roof being the very next one to the chimney, and presumably 'in the lead,' was disposed of to a speculative company for a considerable sum. I remember my cousin telling me the story—for the occurrence was quite recent—and taking me with him to the roof to explain it, but I am afraid I was more attracted by the mystery of the closely-guarded building and the strangely-tinted smoke which arose from this temple where money was actually being 'made' than by anything else. Nor did I dream as I stood there—a very lanky, open-mouthed youth—that only three or four years later I should be the secretary of its superintendent. In my more adventurous ambition I am afraid I would have accepted the suggestion half-heartedly. Merely to have helped to stamp the gold which other people had adventurously found was by no means a part of my youthful dreams."

---

[1] His relative's semi-restaurant home.

In the more sedate days of his early married life he took to his secretarial duties very contentedly, and, happily, did not find them too exacting. Mr. Swain, the Superintendent of the Mint, liked him, and, being interested in his literary achievements, allowed him as much leisure as possible. Bret Harte did not resign his appointment at the Mint until some change of Government caused Mr. Swain to make way for another superintendent. The tasks allotted to the young secretary were always carefully performed; but in every moment he could call his own he let his fancy run freely, and diligently wrought at his poems and stories.

On 28th May 1864, Mr. Stoddart tells me, the first number of *The Californian* was issued by Charles Henry Webb, its editor and proprietor. This was the famous weekly of which Mr. W. D. Howells, in an article on Mark Twain, has said :—

"I think Mr. Clemens (Mark Twain) has not mentioned his association with that extraordinary group of wits and poets, of whom Mr. Bret Harte, Mr. Charles Warren Stoddard, Mr. Charles Henry Webb, and Mr. Prentice Mulford were, with himself, the most conspicuous. These ingenuous young men, with the fatuity of gifted people, had established a literary newspaper in San Francisco, and they brilliantly co-operated to its early extinction."

Mr. Stoddard, it should be mentioned, published the first book of genuine poetry in California.

Bret Harte has himself told the story of how in his "Mint" days he first met his famous brother humorist, "Mark Twain." His friend and journalistic colleague, Mr. George Barnes, called upon him to introduce a young man whose appearance was decidedly impressive. "His head," he wrote, "was striking. He had the curly hair, the aquiline nose, and even the aquiline eye—an eye so eagle-like that a second lid would not have surprised me—of an unusual and dominant nature. His eyebrows were very thick and bushy. His dress was careless, and his general manner one of supreme indifference to surroundings and circumstances. Barnes introduced him as Mr. Sam. Clemens, and remarked that he had shown a very unusual talent in a number of newspapers contributed over the signature of 'Mark Twain.' We talked on different topics, and about a month afterwards Clemens dropped in upon me again. He had been away in the mining districts on some newspaper assignment in, the meantime. In the course of conversation he remarked that the unearthly laziness that prevailed in the town he had been visiting was beyond anything in his previous experience. He said the men did nothing all day long but sit around the bar-room stove, spit, and 'swop lies.' He spoke in a slow, rather satirical drawl, which was in itself irresistible. He went on to tell one of those extravagant stories, and half unconsciously dropped into the lazy tone and manner of the original narrator. I asked him to tell it again to a friend who came in, and then asked him to write it out for *The Californian.* He did so, and when published it was an emphatic success. It was the first work of his that had attracted general attention, and it crossed the Sierras for an Eastern reading. The story was 'The Jumping Frog of Calaveras.' It is now known and laughed over, I suppose, wherever the English language is spoken; but it will never be as funny to any one in print as it was to me, told for the first time by the unknown Twain himself on that morning in the San Francisco Mint."

It was, no doubt, through this introduction that Mark Twain became a welcome contributor not only to *The Californian* but to *The Golden Era*. One scrap of characteristic art criticism from his pen that appeared in the columns of the last-named journal has been preserved. It deals with a famous picture, "Samson and Delilah," then being exhibited in San Francisco, and it runs as follows: "Now what is the first thing you see in looking at this picture down at the Bank Exchange? Is it the gleaming eye and fine face of Samson? or the muscular Philistine gazing furtively at the lovely Delilah? or is it the rich drapery? or is it the truth to nature in that pretty foot? No, sir. The first thing that catches the eye is the scissors on the floor at her feet. Them scissors is too modern; thar warn't no scissors like them in them days—by a d—d sight."

Mr. Stoddard informs me that the first article that appeared in *The Californian* was "Neighbourhoods I have Moved From, by a Hypochondriac. No. One." It was followed by "The Ballad of the Emeu." Each is Bret Harte's; both are unsigned; but they are acknowledged to-day in his collected works. The "Condensed Novels," which he began in *The Golden Era*, were continued in *The Californian*. To that highly interesting periodical he contributed many poems, grave and gay, sketches, essays, editorials, and book reviews; some of the latter were clever bits of verse. Occasionally one finds the name "Francis Bret Harte," or perhaps "Bret," or only "H." attached to a piece of prose or verse; many of his contributions are unsigned, and much of the admirable work he did then is now of no avail on account of its purely local and ephemeral character.

While he was on terms of close intimacy with his literary comrades, Bret Harte was making other friends. He had attracted the attention of Mrs. General Fremont—the wife of "The Pathfinder"—who introduced him to Thomas Starr King, an eminent man of letters and a famous Unitarian preacher, who also saw and predicted the brilliant future that lay before the eager but anxious young man. These became his warm friends, advisers, and encouragers, and it was under King's presidency that his soul-stirring poem, "The Reveille," was, while the great Civil War was raging, recited in public.

Every admirer of Bret Harte knows the lilt of the wonderful lines, commencing with:—

"Hark! I hear the tramp of thousands,
And of armèd men the hum;
Lo! a nation's hosts have gathered
Round the quick alarming drum—
Saying, 'Come,
Freemen, come!
Ere your heritage be wasted,' said the
quick alarming drum;"

knows how the hearts of the hesitating and even the recreant are probed until the verses wind up with the grand peroration :—

"Thus they answered, hoping, fearing,
Some in faith, and doubting some,
Till a trumpet-voice proclaiming,
Said, 'My chosen people, come!'
    Then the drum,
    Lo! was dumb,
For the great heart of the nation, throbbing,
  answered, 'Lord, we come!'"

These noble lines have aroused enthusiasm in thousands of readers, and I was amazed when their author told me that at their first public recitation, to his intense disappointment, they seemed to make little or no impression. Happily he lived to know how they lived, and were likely to live, as long as poetry is understood and appreciated.

Under the influence of Thomas Starr King he became a Unitarian, but in later years, I think, he was content to worship God through His works. But though in matters of religion he held his own broad-minded views, he never wanted to argue or find fault with those who cherished more orthodox opinions. He hated anything like cant or narrow-mindedness, but while he marvelled at some of the creeds professed by others, I never heard him speak slightingly of any one of them, and he strongly maintained that if they helped men and women to lead upright and useful lives they one and all did glorious work. The only thing he disliked about religion was the interference of busybodies with their friends' and neighbours views. Over this he could grow very angry.

He was a believer in science, but he held with Herbert Spencer that "so far from science being irreligious as many think, it is the neglect of science that is irreligious—it is the refusal to study surrounding creation that is irreligious."

When Thomas Starr King died Bret Harte paid more than one tribute to his memory. Witness the beautiful little poem :—

RELIEVING GUARD.

T.S.K. *Obiit March 4th*, 1864.

"Came the relief, 'What, sentry, ho!
How passed the night through thy long waking?'
'Cold, cheerless, dark, as may befit
The hour before the dawn is breaking.'

'No sight? No sound?' 'No; nothing save
The plover from the marshes calling,
And in yon western sky, about
An hour ago, a star was falling.'

'A star? There's nothing strange in that.'
'No, nothing; but above the thicket,
Somehow it seemed to me that God
Somewhere had just relieved a picket.'"

His second son was named after his dead but never-forgotten friend. Francis King Harte, to whom I am indebted for much friendly help in the compilation of these pages, was born at San Francisco on March 5th, 1865.

In 1865 Bret Harte's first volume of verse appeared.

It bore the title of "The Lost Galleon"—a beautifully-conceived and perfectly-executed poem, but it also contained various contributions to the lyrics of the Civil War, and some humorous pieces destined to become world-famous. Writing of him at this period, his old colleague, Mr. Noah Brooks, has said: "Harte always manifested in his work that fastidiousness in choice of words which has characterised him ever since. It was humorously complained of him that he filled the newspaper office wastepaper baskets with his self-rejected manuscripts and produced next to nothing for the printer. Once, assigned to the task of writing an obituary article that was not to exceed 'two stick-fuls' in length, he actually filled the wastepaper basket with fragments of 'copy' which he tore up before he produced the requisite amount of matter. Going into my own editorial room early one forenoon, I found Harte at my desk writing a little note to make an appointment with me to dine together later in the day. Seeing me he started up with the remark that my early arrival at the office would obviate the necessity of his finishing the note which he was writing, and which he tore up as he spoke. When, this little matter settled, Harte had gone out, crumbling in his hands the fragments of the unfinished note, I chanced to look into the wastepaper basket, and saw a litter of paper carrying Harte's familiar handwriting, and turning over the basket with quiet amusement, I discovered that he had left there the rejected manuscript of no less than three summonses, which any other man would have disposed of in something like this order: 'Dear Brooks,—We will dine together at Louis Dingeon's at 6.30 P.M. to-night.'"

Mr. Densmore, a colleague of Bret Harte's on the literary staff of *The Golden Era*, has said: "While I was writing column after column, Bret Harte would be sitting looking at his desk. And finally he would evolve a paragraph, but that paragraph would be worth everything else in the paper."

This extreme care in authorship characterised him throughout his life. How often have I seen him, paper before him and pen in hand, "looking at his desk," sometimes at the very desk on which I now write these lines, and then after long periods of apparent abstraction, the thoughts would be knitted together, and the pen begin to flow.

Since Bret Harte's death, Mr. Noah Brooks has added to these early-day recollections of his friend.

"Scores of writers," he says, "have become known to me in the course of a long life, but I have never known another so fastidious and so laborious as Bret Harte. His writing materials, the light and heat, and even the adjustment of the furniture of the writing room, must be as he desired, otherwise he could not get on with his work. Even when his environment was all that he could wish, there were times when the divine afflatus would not come and the day's work must be abandoned. My editorial rooms in San Francisco were not far from his secluded den, and often, if he opened my door late in the afternoon, with a peculiar cloud on his face, I knew that he had come to wait for me to go to dinner with him, having given up the impossible task of writing when the mood was not on him. 'It's no use, Brooks,' he would say. 'Everything goes wrong; I cannot write a line. Let's have an early dinner at Martini's.' As soon as I was ready we would go merrily off to dine together, and, having recovered his equanimity, he would stick to his desk through the later hours of the night, slowly forging those masterpieces which cost him so dearly."

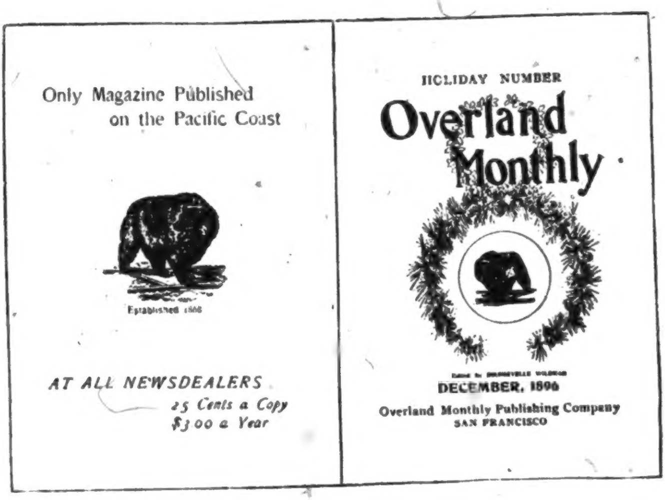
So curiously at variance with the rough life that he had been leading were these suddenly acquired niceties of taste that they might appear incredible. But they always remained with him, and many of his later friends must have marvelled, as I have done, to hear a man whose one idea of life was the quintessence of refinement, relate the rough adventures, and the almost squalid surroundings of his youthful Californian days. He had undergone far coarser experiences than he ever put into his stories, or than I can relate here.

Speaking of him at this period, another famous American writer, Joaquin Miller, says: "On reaching San Francisco, I went at once to Stoddard, and he took me to Harte. I found a spare, slim young man, in a chip hat and a summer dress of the neatest and nattiest cut, who took me cordially into his confidence at once. I liked his low voice, his quiet, earnest, and unaffected manner from the first. He had neat editorial rooms, where he made me welcome, although he was then engaged as Secretary in the Mint. . . . I think he was the cleanest man I ever met. He was always as clean, modest, and graceful of speech as a girl."

And this was the man who had but recently laboured and camped out with the gold-diggers, undergone the perils of the stage expressman, and begrimed himself with slumgullion and printer's ink! Joaquin Miller summed up his new acquaintance well. The keen sense and love of delicacy that he at once detected was inherent in the character of Bret Harte.

In July 1868, when *The Overland Monthly* was founded, Bret Harte became its editor. Concerning this appointment Mr. Rounsevelle Wildman, the editor of *The Overland Monthly, New Series*, has written: "When Anton Roman made up his mind to establish a monthly magazine in connection with his publishing and bookselling business, he did so with the advice of Noah Brooks, Charles Warren Stoddard, B. B. Redding, W. C. Bartlett, and others, for most of whom he had already published books. When the question of a suitable editor arose Stoddard recommended Bret Harte, then an almost unknown writer on *The Golden Era*, at that time a popular weekly. Bret Harte accepted, with some misgivings as to financial matters, but was reassured when Roman showed him pledges of support by advertising patronage up to nine hundred dollars a month, which he had secured in advance."

The embryo editor was also assured that his old literary colleagues would "turn in and help him." Thus encouraged he set to work, and in due course the first number appeared. It was plainly and unos-



Only Magazine Published
on the Pacific Coast

Established 1868

AT ALL NEWSDEALERS
25 Cents a Copy
$3 00 a Year

HOLIDAY NUMBER

Overland Monthly

DECEMBER, 1896

Overland Monthly Publishing Company
SAN FRANCISCO

"The Bear on the Railway Track." The symbol designed by Bret Harte for the first number of the "Overland Monthly." He described the sketch on the left as "The Original!" "None others are genuine!" That on the right as "Later variation, after B. H. left the editorship." The symbol is still used, and "The Original" retains its place.

[*To face p.* 82.

tentatiously got up in a neat drab cover, bearing the title—

THE OVERLAND MONTHLY

DEVOTED TO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY,

and bore for its emblem a small vignette of a bear crossing a railway track. This design was the work of Bret Harte, and was intended to show how the "grizzly" (*Ursus horribilis*), so long the undisturbed monarch of the woods and cañons, was at last face to face with the ubiquitous engineer.

Bret Harte was rather proud of this symbol, and had it engraved on his seal. Showing it to me one day, he said: "You see the bear is shown standing on the track apparently arrested by the approach of the (invisible) train, and rather resenting it. He is, however, rather 'at gaze' than 'at bay.' That was my idea, the beginning of the conflict between barbarian and civilisation."

He had had his own alarming adventures with the "grizzly," but he always spoke of him with a sort of pitying contempt, and I verily believe he entertained some affection for the strange animal so wonderfully described in his lines—

"Coward of heroic size,
In whose lazy muscle lies
Strength we fear and yet despise;
Savage—whose relentless tusks
Are content with acorn husks;
Robber—whose exploits ne'er soared
O'er the bee or squirrel's hoard;

Whiskered chin and feeble nose,
Claws of steel on baby toes—
Here in solitude and shade,
Shambling, shuffling, plantigrade,
Be thy courses undismayed.

Here, where Nature makes thy bed,
Let thy rude half-human tread
Point to hidden Indian springs
Lost in ferns and fragrant grasses,
Hovered o'er by timid wings,
Where the wood-duck lightly passes,
Where the wild bee holds her sweets,
Epicurean retreats,
Fit for thee and better than
Fearful spoils of dangerous man.

In thy fat-jowled deviltry
Friar Tuck shall live with thee;
Thou may'st levy tithe and dole;
Thou shalt spread the woodland cheer,
From the pilgrim taking toll;
Match thy cunning with his fear;
Eat and drink, and have thy fill,
Yet remain an outlaw still."

But to return to *The Overland Monthly*. At the onset there were not many writers of fiction on the staff, and Bret Harte and Mr. Noah Brooks agreed that they would each write a short story for the first number of the new magazine. They had four months to prepare for the great event, but the first issue of *The Overland* (July 1868) had only one story in its contents, and that was by Mr. Brooks. Bret Harte, with many sighs and groans, confessed that he had been unable to finish the first short story ("Mliss" had been a comparatively long one, and, I think, when it was reprinted abbreviations were made in it) that he had ever undertaken in his life. But he had composed a charming—if daring—little poem for the initial number. It was entitled "San Francisco from the Sea," and from it I may quote the following lines:—

"Serene, indifferent of Fate,
Thou sittest at the Western Gate;

Upon thy height, so lately won,
Still slant the banners of the sun;

Thou seest the white seas strike their tents
O Warder of two Continents!

. . . . . .

Oh, lion's whelp, that hidest fast
In jungle growth of spire and mast!

I know thy cunning and thy greed,
Thy hard high lust and wilful deed.

And all thy glory has to tell
Of specious gifts material.

Drop down, O Fleecy Fog, and hide
Her sceptic sneer and all her pride!

Wrap her, O Fog, in gown and hood
Of her Franciscan Brotherhood.

Hide me her faults, her sin and blame;
With thy grey mantle cloak her shame!

So shall she, cowled, sit and pray
Till morning bears her sins away.

Then rise, O Fleecy Fog, and raise
The glory of her coming days;

. . . . . .

When Art shall raise and Culture lift
The sensual joys and meaner thrift,

And all fulfilled the vision we
Who watch and wait shall never see,

Who in the morning of her race,
Toiled fair or meanly in our place,

But yielding to the common lot,
Lie unrecorded and forgot."

Considering that when Bret Harte penned these ringing and somewhat scathing couplets he was living in San Francisco, it was bold to speak so fearlessly of his environment. He was soon to learn that he, at least, was not to "lie unrecorded and forgot."

His first short story, when it did appear, in the second number of the *Overland Monthly* (August 1868), created a sensation. It was "The Luck of Roaring Camp." A copy of the magazine containing it, and always cherished by the author, is before me as I write these lines. The story only occupies a few of its pages, and it is unheralded and unsigned, but it moved the reading world in no uncertain way.

Bret Harte had told his intimate friends that it was his ambition to become the founder of a characteristic Western literature, and he confessed in later years to a very early half-boyish, but always enthusiastic, belief in such a thing being possible, a belief that never deserted him until he convinced the world that it had become a reality. But he had to reckon with fearful odds. Prophets are not in their own country received with open arms, and the Californians in those days were inclined to pin their faith in Eastern writers. "The illustrated and satirical journals," he afterwards declared, "were as frequently seen in California as in Massachusetts, and he had often experienced more difficulty in procuring a copy of our English *Punch* in a British provincial town than at 'Red Dog' or 'One Horse Gulch.'" It was, he thought, because "Home" was still potent with these voluntary exiles in their moments of relaxation, and it was for this reason he had to fight against the firmly riveted armour of the demon of prejudice.

In "The Luck of Roaring Camp" he well and truly laid the foundation-stone of his fame; it was the turning-point of his career, but, like most turning-points, it presented many difficulties. Here he shall speak for himself:—

"When the first number of *The Overland Monthly* appeared," he wrote, "the author, then its editor, called the publisher's attention to the lack of any distinctive Californian romance in its pages, and averred that, should no other contribution come in, he himself would supply the omission in the next number. No other contribution was offered, and the author, having the plot and general idea already in his mind, in a few days sent the manuscript of 'The Luck of Roaring Camp' to the printer. He had not yet received the proof sheets when he was suddenly summoned to the office of the publisher, whom he found standing the picture of dismay and anxiety, with the proof before him. The indignation and stupefaction of the author can be well understood when he was told that the printer, instead of returning the proofs to him, submitted them to the publisher, with the emphatic declaration that the matter thereof was so indecent, irreligious, and improper, that his proof-reader—a young lady—had with difficulty been induced to continue its perusal, and that he, as a friend of the publisher, and a well-wisher of the magazine, was impelled to present to him personally this shameless evidence of the manner in which the editor was imperilling the future of that enterprise. It should be premised that the critic was a man of character and standing, the head of a large printing establishment, a church member, and, the author thinks, a deacon. In which circumstances the publisher frankly admitted to the author that, while he could not agree with all the printer's criticisms, he thought the story open to grave objection, and its publication of doubtful expediency."

I wonder if at that irritating moment Bret Harte's mind wandered wistfully back to one of those primitive Californian newspaper offices which he knew and described so well, where "the little wooden building had invaded Nature without subduing it. It was filled night and day with the murmur of pines and their fragrance. Squirrels scampered over its roof when it was not preoccupied by woodpeckers, and a printer's devil had once seen a nest-building jay enter the composing window, flutter before one of the slanting type cases with an air of deliberate selection, and then fly off with a vowel in its bill."

Truly then the editor was monarch of all he surveyed.

Of the totally unexpected and exasperating San Francisco incident his narrative continues as follows :—

"Believing only that he was the victim of some extraordinary typographical blunder, the author at once sat down and read the proof. In its new dress, with the metamorphosis of type—that metamorphosis which every author so well knows changes his relation to it and makes it no longer seem a part of himself—he was able to read it with something of the freshness of an untold tale. As he read on he found himself affected even as he had been affected in the conception and writing of it—a feeling so incompatible with the charges against it that he could only lay it down and declare emphatically, albeit hopelessly, that he could really see nothing objectionable in it. Other opinions were sought and given. To the author's surprise, he found himself in the minority. Finally the story was submitted to three gentlemen of culture and experience, friends of publisher and author, who were unable, however, to come to any clear decision. It was, however, suggested to the author that, assuming the natural hypothesis that his editorial reasoning might be warped by his literary predilections in a consideration of one of his own productions, a personal sacrifice would at this juncture be in the last degree heroic. This last suggestion had the effect of ending all further discussion; for he at once informed the publisher that the question of the propriety of the story was no longer at issue; the only question was of his capacity to exercise the proper editorial judgment; and that unless he was permitted to test that capacity by the publication of the story, and abide squarely by the result, he must resign his editorial position. The publisher, possibly struck with the author's confidence, possibly from kindliness of disposition to a younger man, yielded, and 'The Luck of Roaring Camp' was published in the current number of the magazine for which it was written, as it was written, without emendation, omission, alteration, or apology. A no inconsiderable part of the grotesqueness of the situation was the feeling, which the author retained throughout the whole affair, of the perfect sincerity, good faith, and seriousness of his friend's—the printer's—objection, and for many days thereafter he was haunted by a consideration of the sufferings of this conscientious man, obliged to assist materially in disseminating the dangerous and subversive doctrines contained in this baleful fiction. What solemn protests must have been laid with the ink on the rollers and impressed upon those wicked sheets! what pious warnings must have been secretly folded and stitched in that number of *The Overland Monthly!* Across the chasm of years and distance the author stretches forth the hand of forgiveness, not forgetting the gentle proof-reader, that chaste and unknown nymph whose mantling cheeks and downcast eyes gave the first indications of warning."

Mr. Noah Brooks has recorded this curious episode as follows:—

"Perhaps I may be pardoned," he says, "for a brief reference to an odd complication that arose while 'The Luck of Roaring Camp' was being put into type in the printing office where *The Overland Monthly* was prepared for publication. A young lady who served as proof-reader in the establishment had been somewhat shocked by the scant morals of the mother of the Luck, and when she came to the scene where Kentuck, after reverently fondling the infant, said 'he wrastled with my finger, the d—d little cuss,' the indignant proof-reader was ready to throw up her engagement rather than go any further with a story so wicked and immoral! There was consternation throughout the establishment, and the head of the concern went to the office of the publisher with the virginal proof-reader's protest. Unluckily Mr. Roman was absent from the city. Harte, when notified of the obstacle raised in the way of 'The Luck of Roaring Camp,' manfully insisted that the story must be printed as he wrote it, or not at all. Mr. Roman's *locum tenens* in despair brought the objectionable manuscript around to my office and asked my advice. When I had read the sentence that had caused all this turmoil, having first listened to the tale of the much-bothered temporary publisher, I surprised him by a burst of laughter. It seemed to me incredible that such a tempest in a teacup could have been raised by Harte's bit of character sketching. But, recovering my gravity, I advised that the whole question should await Mr. Roman's return. I was sure that he would never consent to any 'editing' of Harte's story. This was agreed to, and when the publisher came back a few days later, the embargo was removed. 'The Luck of Roaring Camp' was printed as it was written, and printing office and vestal proof-reader survived the shock."

It is amazing to think that, but for the determination and self-confidence of the young author, a story that has gladdened and softened the hearts of thousands—a story that has drawn welcome smiles and purifying tears from all who can appreciate its deftly mingled humour and pathos — a story that has been a boon to humanity—might have been sacrificed to the shallow ruling of a prudish young lady proof-reader and a narrow-minded printer.

Bret Harte's faith in his story had no doubt been strengthened by the impression it made on his wife. When, before handing it to the printer, he read it to her she shed tears. I believe she wept again when she heard there was a possibility of its not being published.

But though successfully launched, "The Luck of Roaring Camp" did not at first have plain sailing. By the local press the story was received coolly, and the "religious" journals raged against it in a way that must have rejoiced the heart of its fair proof-reader. It was even said that the popularity gained by the first number of *The Overland Monthly* was ruined by this outrageous publication in its second.

Bret Harte has himself recorded how "Christians were cautioned against pollution by its contact; practical business men were gravely urged to condemn and frown upon this picture of Californian society that was not conducive to Eastern immigration; its hapless author was held up to obloquy as a man who had abused a sacred trust. If its life and reputation had depended on its reception in California, this explanation would have been needless. But, fortunately, the young *Overland Monthly* had in its first number secured a hearing and position throughout the American Union, and the author waited the larger verdict. The publisher, albeit his worst fears were confirmed, was not a man to weakly regret a position he had once taken, and waited also. The return mail from the East brought a letter addressed to the 'Editor of *The Overland Monthly*,' enclosing a letter from Fields, Osgood & Co., the publishers of *The Atlantic Monthly*, addressed to the—to them—unknown author of 'The Luck of Roaring Camp.' This the author opened, and found to be a request, upon the most flattering terms, for a story for the *Atlantic* similar to the 'Luck.' The same mail brought newspapers and reviews welcoming the little foundling of Californian literature with an enthusiasm that half frightened its author; but with the placing of that letter in the hands of the publisher, who chanced to be standing by his side, and who during those dark days had, without the author's faith, sustained the author's position, he felt that his compensation was full and complete."

"Thus encouraged," he continues, "'The Luck of

Roaring Camp' was followed by 'The Outcasts of Poker Flat,' 'Miggles,' 'Tennessee's Partner,' and those various other characters who had impressed the author when, a mere truant schoolboy, he had lived among them. It is hardly necessary to say to any observer of human nature that at this time he was advised by kind and well-meaning friends to content himself with the success of the 'Luck,' and not tempt criticism again; or that from that moment ever after he was in receipt of that equally sincere contemporaneous criticism which assured him gravely that each successive story was a falling off from the last. Howbeit, by reinvigorated confidence in himself and some conscientious industry, he managed to get together in a year six or eight of these sketches, which in a volume called 'The Luck of Roaring Camp, and other Sketches,' gave him that encouragement in America and England that has since seemed to justify him in swelling these records of a picturesque passing civilisation."

Few of Bret Harte's stories have been more popular than "Tennessee's Partner," and like most of them it was founded on absolute fact. For years and years a close friendship had existed between two Californian settlers named Chaffee and Chamberlain. They lived their simple lives under the same primitive roof-tree—sharing a common purse, and never having a dispute. Upon their lives, and no doubt with a beneficial amount of added fancy, the author based his pathetic tale. In the story Chaffee became the simple but true-minded partner who loved Tennessee to the death.

Though Tennessee stole his wedded wife, the partner, who always bore the relative name, forgave him, and unsuccessfully endeavoured to ransom him at the cost of all his worldly possessions from the clutches of Judge Lynch. Then, when all was over, the mourning partner, alone with his little donkey "Jinny," cut down Tennessee's body, and in his rough cart and a rude coffin half-filled with bark and the tassels of pine, and further decorated with slips of willow and made fragrant with buck-eye blossom, took his old comrade away to be buried in the fern-overgrown garden patch of the house he had so basely wronged.

The story has it that the foundation of "Tennessee's Partner" lay in the eloquent plea that Chaffee once made for his friend's life. It saved a neck from the Vigilance Committee, and turned the culprit over to the powers that be; and Chaffee's eloquence had won a boon never granted before in Tuolumne County, though many, many years elapsed before a little silver-haired old man was told that he and his devotion to his partner had been used to point a moral and adorn a tale.

As related and embellished by Bret Harte, the story is indeed a moving one, and it has served more than one useful purpose.

In her charming book, "Life on the Stage," Clara Morris, the famous American actress, has written :—

"I had made my hit with the public by moving the people's feelings to the point of tears; but to do that I had first to move my own heart, for, try as I would, no amount of careful acting had the desired effect. *I* had to shed tears, or *they* would not. Now that is not an easy thing to do to order, in cold blood. While the play is new one's nerves are strained almost to the breaking point—one is over-sensitive and the feelings are easily moved; then the pathetic words I am speaking touch my heart, tears rush to my eyes, tears are heard in my voice, and other hearts respond swiftly; but when you have calmed down, when you have repeated the lines so often that they no longer mean anything to you, what are you to do then?"

Then she records how she overcame her difficulty by thinking, while she was acting, of something that moved her more than the play that no longer appealed to her, and says:—

"Thus in 'Alixe' it was not for my lost lover I oftenest wept such racing tears, but for poor old Tennessee's partner as he buried his worthless dead, with his honest old heart breaking before your eyes."

It was within a few weeks of poor Bret Harte's death that I came across these lines, and thinking they would please him I sent them to him.

In one of his last letters to me (it is dated April 12, 1902) he wrote:—

"MY DEAR PEMBERTON,—I had heard that published story of Clara Morris before. I am glad it touched you, for *she* told me it herself! She was a strange, passionate, uncontrollable genius, yet in many ways as *simply* fine as any actress I have seen."

And then he adds pathetically—

"I am still very poorly; everything is against me—even this smileless, joyless, 'sere and yellow' spring! I get no stimulus from it. I can scarcely write a letter. The grasshopper is indeed a burden!

"Nevertheless—Yours always,

"BRET HARTE."

The little story of the origin of "Tennessee's Partner" proves that, some sapient critics notwithstanding, its author did draw his characters from the life. He was generally indifferent with regard to criticism, but when he was told, as he was frequently told, that his characters were merely the creation of his brain he would wax indignant—or as nearly indignant as a man of his gentle nature could be.

Appreciation of course pleased and encouraged him, but save where it savoured of malice, adverse criticism was with him like water on a duck's back. He always put his heart into his work, and he had faith in his power to tell his own stories in his own way. And yet on the point to which I have alluded he on more than one occasion spoke out.

"Critics," he once said, "who have taken large and exhaustive views of mankind and society from club windows in Pall Mall or the Fifth Avenue can only accept for granted the turbulent chivalry that thronged the streets of San Francisco in the gala days of her youth, and must read the blazon of their deeds like the doubtful quarterings of the shield of Amadis de Gaul. The author has been frequently asked if such and such incidents were real; if he had ever met such and such characters? To this he must return the one answer, that in only a single instance was he conscious of drawing purely from his imagination and fancy for a character and a logical succession of incidents drawn therefrom. A few weeks after his story was published he received a letter, authentically signed, *correcting some of the minor details of his facts!* and enclosing as corroborative evidence a slip from an old newspaper, wherein the main incident of his supposed fanciful creation was recorded with a largeness of statement that far transcended his powers of imagination."

Again, with regard to his pen-and-ink life studies, he wrote: "My stories are true, not only in phenomena, but in characters. I do not pretend to say that many of my characters existed exactly as they are described, but I believe there is not one of them that did not have a real human being as a suggesting and a starting-point. Some of them, indeed, had several. John Oakhurst, for instance, was drawn quite closely from life. On one occasion, however, when a story in which he figures was being discussed, a friend of mine said, 'I know the original of Oakhurst, the man you took him from.'

"'Who?' said I.

"'Young L——.'

"I was astounded. As a matter of fact, the gambler as portrayed was as good a picture, even to the limp, of young L—— as of the actual original. The two men, you see, belonged to a class which had strongly marked characteristics, and were generally alike in dress and manner."

In after life he encountered even stranger coincidences than these, being brought face to face with facts in real life that almost precisely tallied with fancies he had conjured up in fiction.

One of his early "Poems in Dialect" was entitled "In the Tunnel," and ran as follows:—

"Didn't know Flynn—
Flynn of Virginia—
Long as he's been yar?
Look'ee here, stranger,
Whar *hev* you been?

Here in this tunnel
He was my pardner,
That same Tom Flynn—
Working together,
In wind and weather,
Day out and in.

Didn't know Flynn!
Well, that *is* queer;
Why, it's a sin
To think of Tom Flynn;
Tom with his cheer,
Tom without fear—
Stranger, look yar!

Thar in the drift,
Back to the wall,
He held the timbers
Ready to fall;
Then, in the darkness,
I heard him call:
'Run for your life, Jake!
Run for your wife's sake!
Don't wait for me.'

And that was all
Heard in the din,
Heard of Tom Flynn—
Flynn of Virginia.

That's all about
Flynn of Virginia.
That lets me out.
Here in the damp,
Out of the sun,
That 'ar derned lamp
Makes my eyes run.
Well, there, I'm done.

'But, sir, ~~when you'll~~
Hear the next fool
Asking of Flynn—
Flynn of Virginia—
Just you chip in,
Say you knew Flynn;
Say that you've been yar."

I have heard these verses described as "touching," but "utterly untrue to anything that was likely to happen in real life," and therefore without value. "What man," said these practical critics, "would in a moment of awful danger calmly make the sacrifice of Tom Flynn simply because his partner had a wife?"

Years and years after these verses were penned, the following true incident was reported in the American newspapers:—

"INDIANAPOLIS—William Phelps of Richmond, Ky., and James Stansbury of this city were cleaning the inside of an eight-foot upright boiler when a workman turned on the steam, thinking the cock was tight. It leaked, and the scalding steam poured in on the two men. The only exit was up a ladder to a manhole in the top. Both rushed to the ladder. Phelps reached it first, took one step, and stopped. He sprang aside and shouted, '*You go first, Jim; you are married.*' Stansbury dashed up the ladder, and escaped with slight burns about the face and legs. Though Phelps followed at his heels, his act of heroism cost him his life. Both men were being horribly scorched when Phelps made way for his mate. By the time he had followed Stansbury up the ladder, and by a supreme effort dragged his poor scalded body through the manhole, he was in a hopeless condition. He lived for two hours in terrible agony, but did not let a groan escape him. 'It was Jim's right to go first,' he said quietly; 'he is married.'"

The similarity between these simple words of a dying hero, and the equally noble Flynn of Virginia's—

"Run for your life, Jake!
Run for your wife's sake!"

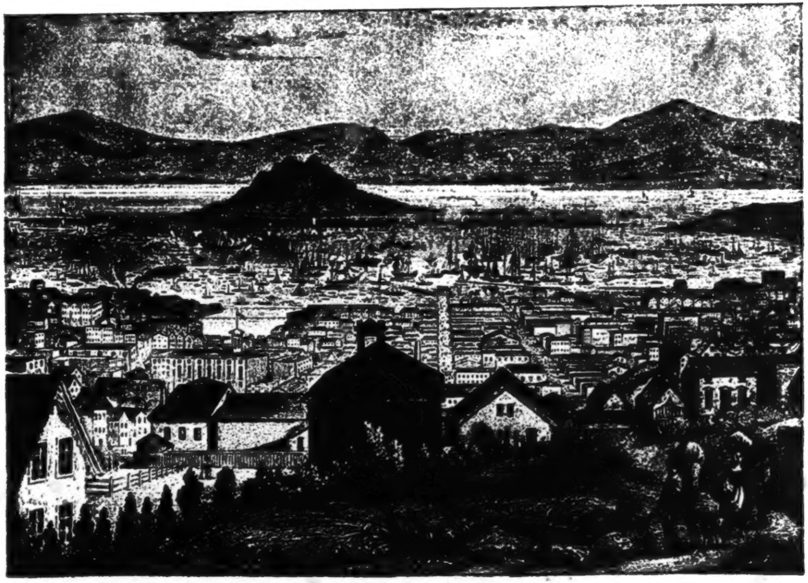
is very striking.

Here is a still more singular coincidence.

When Bret Harte wrote his famous "Condensed Novels," he of course endeavoured to conceive and describe his incidents from an extravagant and impossible point of view. Therein lay much of the humour of his splendid parodies.

In "Selina Sedilia" he good-naturedly imitated Miss M. E. Braddon and Mrs. Henry Wood in their most sensational moods, and at the supreme moment of his travesty he pictures an absurd situation, in which it is decided that an express train, conveying a lady obnoxious to the interests of the unscrupulous hero, "*must not arrive!*" Accordingly a bridge over which it has to pass is cut down by a "hireling" (one "Burke the Slogger"), and falls into the river beneath it, "leaving a space of one hundred feet between the two banks." The horrible moment is at hand. "A shriek from the woods" announces the approach of the doomed express. "The ground trembled. The train was going with fearful rapidity. Another second and it had reached the bank. Burke the Slogger uttered a fiendish laugh. But the next moment the train had leaped across the chasm, striking the rails exactly even, and, dashing out the life of Burke the Slogger, sped away to Slopperton."

When one read this in the "sixties" it seemed far too ridiculous an episode for the conception of even the most daring of sensational novelists. But only a short time ago an incident occurred showing that the velocity of a train could almost vie with the wild fancy of the writer of whimsical burlesque. Witness the following record: "NEW YORK, *Friday.*—'A RACE FOR LIFE.'—A trestle bridge on the South Carolina Railroad near Shelby, 250 feet long and 75 feet wide, collapsed last night just as a passenger train was crossing. The engine-driver feeling the bridge giving way opened the throttle-valve and dashed on at full speed in the hope of getting the train over before the final collapse. His prompt action saved the greater part of the train. All the cars reached



San Francisco. Early in the Mining Era, 1850–1851.

[To face p. 102.

the other side safely except one passenger car and four goods waggons, which were wrecked."

Here is one more instance :—

In "Gabriel Conroy" he graphically, and with his usual minute attention to detail, described the bursting of a huge reservoir, the irruption of its vast volume of water, and the scenes of calamity, peril, and death that ensued therefrom. The catastrophe was the offspring of his brain. He had never seen or heard of such a disaster, but invented it, and its consequences, for the purposes of his story. Sometime after the book was published he received a letter in which he was asked how he could possibly have conceived an event which actually occurred (just as he had imagined it) *after* "Gabriel Conroy" was in the hands of its readers!

Concerning the early days of *The Overland Monthly* Mr. Stoddard has told me much. He knew Bret Harte best at that time and saw much of him. "Fortunately for me," he says, "he took an interest in me at a time when I was most in need of advice, and to his criticism and his encouragement I feel that I owe all that is best in my literary efforts. He was not afraid to speak his mind, and I knew well enough what occasion I gave him; yet he did not judge me more severely than he judged himself. His humour and his fancy were not frightened away even when he was in his severest critical mood. Once when I had sent him some verses for approval he wrote :—

"'The Albatross' is better, but not best, which is what I wanted. And then you know Coleridge has were few, but notable; society he ignored in those days. He used to accuse me of wasting my substance in riotous visitations, and thought me a spendthrift of time. He had the precious companionship of books, and the lives of those about him were as an open volume, wherein he read curiously and to his profit. Had he not a genuine love of children, he could not have written 'The Luck of Roaring Camp.' His understanding and appreciation of childhood and all that pertains to its embryo world, he must have developed in his own home."

That must have been so. We all know that the joys and griefs of infancy illuminate some of his best work.

That he could be a caustic as well as a kindly critic is without doubt.

His editorial work comprised the book reviews and the gossipy article labelled "Etc.," which appeared towards the end of the magazine.

Mr. Noah Brooks shared the book reviewing with him, and has recorded how they used to strive, good-naturedly, for the privilege of dealing with volumes that were doomed to be "scalped." "With the confidence of youth," he says, "it was easier for us to 'scalp' a poor book than to do full justice to a worthy one. As a book-scalper Harte greatly excelled. His satire was fine and keen."

As the editor of "Etc." he required no assistance. His comments on passing events were ever trenchant, witty, and clever. Sometimes, however, they were in a certain way incautious—as witness the following example.

"Harte," says Mr. Brooks, "hated the materialism and ungracious atmosphere of San Francisco, and he could never be reconciled to the commercialism that pervaded every rank of society. We were visited by a tolerably brisk earthquake shock—I think it was in 1869—to the great dismay of the 'leading citizens' of San Francisco, and a select committee of bankers and merchants called on the newspaper editors to treat the 'trembler' as lightly as possible. The Associated Press agents were requested to refain from alarming the East with sensational despatches. It would never do to give our town the reputation of an earthquake's centre. Harte was not cautioned, and when the next number of *The Overland Monthly* came out his editorial page, 'Etc.,' carried an amusing skit, the main point of which was that, according to the San Francisco newspapers, the next earthquake that came along would get the worst of it in an encounter with us."

It is said that in certain quarters Bret Harte was never forgiven for this jest, and that, indirectly, he was made to pay for it.

Popular though his stories had now become in the *Overland*, he did not make such a "sensational" success (I apologise for the word, but can find no better to convey what I mean) as "The Luck of Roaring Camp" until the appearance of those immortal verses commonly called "The Heathen Chinee," but which were really entitled "Plain Language from Truthful James.—Table Mountain, 1870."

By this effort Bret Harte had set little store.

We have seen in these pages how the Chinese were invading California in large numbers, imitating the Caucasian in all things, and in spite of the contempt and even ignominy with which they were treated were quietly and very ingeniously holding their own.

He foresaw what might come of this, and he thought that he could, by treating the situation from a humorous point of view, strike a note in the right direction. It is curious to reflect that Ah Sin and his famous hand at euchre—the "game he did not understand"—were designed to serve a practical purpose; but it was so, and on more than one occasion that purpose was fulfilled.

But it was not until the author-editor wanted to fill a space in his magazine that he took the lines from his desk and handed them to his printer.

Thinking very little of his effort he was not at all surprised that in San Francisco, where it should have been at once understood and appreciated, "The Heathen Chinee" attracted little or no attention, and he had almost forgotten it when it began to create a sensation in the outside world. The verses had been reprinted in an eastern newspaper and were then immediately hailed with delight, their delicious humour being gratefully acknowledged, and their perfect and strangely attractive style cordially praised. They found their way to England, and the chorus of delight was augmented. Within a few weeks millions of people, who knew nothing of possible difficulties which the growing power of the Chinaman might create in the labour markets of California, were talking of Ah Sin—of his "smile that was childlike and bland," and of his "peculiar" way of making sure of "the game he did not understand." It has remained so until to-day. Of the little composition, so quickly conceived and written, and so modestly placed before the world, one English writer has fearlessly said: "No short poem in the English language ever achieved such a success as it did; and perhaps, if we except Pope's 'Essay on Man,' there is no poem in our native tongue that has added so great a number of distinctive phrases and epithets to our everyday speech."

Indeed, it was "The Heathen Chinee" that clenched the growing popularity of Bret Harte's works in England. If some of us missed a little of the fun that those who lived nearer the scene of their action derived from it, it was generally acknowledged that the new author had gone the right way about his work in amusing the public, taking in hand the thing that was next him, and looking at it with the eye of an artist; and while, scathing meanness and vice with their several weapons, being quite assured with Luther that there is nothing the Devil so much hates as a hearty laugh.

But like the actor who never thinks that the part in which he has achieved his greatest popularity is his best assumption, the author of "The Heathen Chinee" never seemed to see the merit of his achievement, and was unelated by the cordiality of its reception. He did not value it, and seemed to deplore the extraordinary interest it excited. Mr. Stoddard believed that he even sought consolation in the knowledge that rash enthusiasm is generally ephemeral.

But on this occasion the enthusiasm was anything but ephemeral, and in quite recent years I have seen Bret Harte, while reading his morning papers, make half humorous, half earnest protest against the constancy with which the sayings of Ah Sin, Bill Nye, and Truthful James, and the doings connected with the game of euchre, played on Table Mountain in 1870, were quoted. One can see it in the papers of to-day. Mr. Stoddard is right in declaring that even the sensational success of "The Heathen Chinee" could not endanger a reputation founded upon a basis of solid worth. "Its establishment was sudden," he says, "one might almost say instantaneous; for parallels I recall 'Waverley' and 'The Pickwick Papers.'" Bret Harte, however, was always singularly sensitive with regard to Ah Sin, and in this connection a rather amusing story may be told. Soon after his first arrival in London his acquaintance was sought by a certain noble Lord of high literary reputation, and, after the customary formal call, he was invited to dine at the great man's house. Always anxious to escape being lionised, he told a friend, who was to be of the party, that he should not go if he thought "The Heathen Chinee" would be quoted at table. The well-meaning friend sent a note of warning to their host; but his lordship loved a joke, and, giving his other guests a hint, they talked "Heathen Chinee" and *nothing else!* At first perplexed and

The home of Bret Harte's "Truthful James" on Jackass Flat, Tuolumne County, California.

[*To face p.* 110.

annoyed, Bret Harte soon saw through the little plot, and heartily joined in the laugh he had helped to raise against himself.

For a long time it was little suspected that the familiar, whimsical, and lapidary-cut lines had a Greek source, but the fact was discovered by one of our English poets. Being challenged on the subject the author at once admitted that his metre had been suggested by the threnody in Swinburne's "Atalanta in Calydon;" and it had oddly occurred to him that the grand and beautiful sweep of that chorus was just the kind of thing that Truthful James would *not* be likely to use in relating his experiences. "Listen," he would say when he spoke on this subject, "listen while I alternate the lines, and you will see what I mean:—

'Atalanta, the fairest of women, whose name is a blessing to speak—
[Yet he played it that day upon William and me in a way I despise.]
The narrowing Symplegades whitened the straits of Propontis with spray—
[And we found on his nails which were taper, what's frequent in tapers that's wax.]'"

And then he would laugh with that happy laugh at his own sense of fun with which his most intimate friends were familiar; and then, suddenly becoming serious, would be quite anxious to assure you that though he had used Swinburne's methods for the purposes of parody, he had the highest respect for his genius.

In 1870 Bret Harte was not only an exceedingly busy man, but his society was in great request. Loving the quiet of home life and longing for the leisure that he felt his literary work needed, he had taken a house outside the city; but he found it difficult to escape from all social engagements. Witness the following letter to his wife:—

"To Mrs. ANNA HARTE, San José.

"ROOMS OF *The Overland Monthly*, SAN FRANCISCO,
Wednesday.

"MY DEAR ANNA,—Felton asked me to dine at Pioche's to-night to meet Professor Price and some of the Regents. I declined at first, saying I wished to go to San José to-night; but he pressed it on the ground of practical utility, and I assented. I suppose this is the way these things are done in California. Yet I would rather have 'a dinner of herbs' in San José than the 'stalled ox' up at Pioche's, but that there is a prospect of the East of Europe in the distance. I suppose you will be doubly disappointed that Mrs. Leech does not come down to-night; but she says she will not be able to leave here till Saturday night, when she and Leech will go down—the latter to return Monday, the former to stay later, if we stay. I met Mr. Beard of San José Mission in the cars yesterday. He repeated his old invitation, and in very shame I at last accepted, promising to bring you and the boys on Saturday morning by the *R. R.* to Washington Station, when he will meet us with a carriage to take us to the Mission, a mile or two distant, where we are to spend the day, returning by the evening train to San José. So don't make any other plans for Saturday.

"I've seen Barrett. He will not make any other than his first offer, and of course I declined to accept it. But of this I will say more when I see you to-morrow (Thursday) night. Your affectionate

FRANK."

Whether he willed it or not, the excitement created by "The Heathen Chinee" was destined to have a great effect upon his career. Soon after the verses appeared, a single new firm in New York was taking twelve hundred copies of *The Overland Monthly*, and the offers he now received to take his standing in Western America became too tempting to be refused. Considering his wife and children he felt he had no right to decline them, though it was not without a pang that he left the shores on which he had so firmly planted his foot, and the colleagues and comrades whom he loved. But probably he had lingered long enough, and Mr. Stoddard who had, as we have seen, worked side by side with him in San Francisco, says:—

"When he left California in 1871, he left it betimes; he took with him about all that was worth taking, and the California he once knew, and surely must have loved, lives forever in his pages. It no longer exists in fact; but for him, in another generation, it would have been forgotten. Because he had penetration such as few possess, and exceptional fancy, imagination, and literary art, he has been thought untrue to nature; those whom he has pictured would have no difficulty in recognising themselves and each other could they but see the types he has made his own. It has been said, too, that he repeats himself. He does; so does spring and so does summer—each is but another spring, another summer; but they are never twice alike, nor would we have them other than they are. Any one can vouch for Bret Harte's truth to nature who knew San Francisco in the fifties, and is familiar with his civic and character sketches; what is true of one page is true of all. It is the point of view in every case that determines to whom the page or the picture shall appeal, and whether favourably or not. His experience in New England weighs little in the balance with his experience in California; his experience abroad even less. It was California, and early California—and let me say picturesque California—that first appealed to him, and through him to all the civilised nations in their several tongues."

Of course his friends had to give him a little "send off." "The night before he left California for New York," records Mr. Noah Brooks, "a little party of us, eight, all working writers, met at a farewell dinner. It was one of the veritable *noctes ambrosianæ;* the talk was intimate, heart-to-heart, and altogether of the shop. Naturally Harte was the centre of the little company, and he was never more fascinating and companionable. Day was breaking when the party dispersed, and the ties that bound Harte to California were sundered."

Such a gathering as this would appeal to Bret Harte, and I know that the memory of it lived pleasantly in his mind. But of his hatred of any public demonstration made on his behalf, and of his keen desire to avoid any such function, Mr. Brooks narrates the following characteristic anecdote:—

"Chicago," he says, "had put in a bid for the author of 'The Luck of Roaring Camp,' and a dinner was made for him as he passed through that city. He accepted the invitation, but did not appear at the dinner, much to the disgust of his hosts, who afterwards said that a cheque of liberal figures, or a deed for a house and lot, or both, had been laid under his plate, but were saved by his 'bad manners.' When I met Harte in New York, I asked him about the incident, and he said, 'In Chicago I stayed with relations of my wife's, who lived on the North Side, or the East Side, or the North-east Side, or Lord knows where, and when I accepted an invitation to a dinner in a hotel in the centre of the city, I expected that a guide would be sent me. I was a stranger in a strange city; a carriage was not easily to be obtained in the neighbourhood where I was, and, in utter ignorance of the way I should take to reach the hotel I waited for a guide until the hour for dinner had passed, and then sat down, as your friend S. P. D. said to you in California, "*en famille* with my family." That's all there was in it.'"

It is a little difficult to swallow that part of the story that deals with the "cheque under the plate," but I can readily picture Bret Harte, as the unprior claim on the bird. But I'll use him unless you send me something else; you can, an you like, take this as a threat.

"'In "Jason's Quest" you have made a mistake of subject. It is by no means suited to your best thought, and you are quite as much at sea in your mythology as Jason was. You can do, have done, and must do better. Don't waste your strength in experiments. Give me another South Sea Bubble, a prose tropical picture, with the Cannibal, who is dead, left out.'

"I am sure that the majority of the contributors to *The Overland Monthly*, while it was edited by Bret Harte, profited, as I did, by his careful and judicious criticism. Fastidious to a degree, he could not overlook a lack of finish in the manuscript offered him. He had a special taste in the choice of titles, and I have known him to alter the name of an article two or three times in order that the table of contents might read handsomely and harmoniously."

Joaquin Miller also speaks with appreciation of the encouragement he received from the first editor of the *Overland*. He was grateful for his generous review of "his first little book, published in Oregon late in the sixties;" and says: "As I turn back over the story of my life, it really looks as if Bret Harte was my mascotte, good genius, or what you please."

Of the pains the critical yet kindly editor took in his own work there is no doubt. Mr. Stoddard found him one day pacing the floor of his office in the Mint; he was knitting his brows and staring at vacancy; his visitor wondered why. He was watching and waiting for a word, the right word, the one word of all others to fit into a line of recently written prose. Mr. Stoddard suggested one; it would not answer, it must be a word of two syllables, or the natural rhythm of the sentence would suffer. Thus he perfected his prose. Once, when he had taken his friend to task for a bit of careless work, then under his critical eye, and complained of a false number, the conscious writer thought to turn away his wrath with a soft answer. He told him he had just met a man who had wept over a certain passage in one of his stories. 'Well,' said Bret Harte, 'he had a right to; I wept when I wrote it."

Mr. Stoddard has given me an interesting and somewhat pathetic little word-picture of the young Mint secretary (let it be remembered that Bret Harte was not yet thirty when "The Luck" captured and comforted the hungry heart of "Roaring Camp," and the Camp the heart of all the world) trying to combine literary with official work.

"He was now a man with a family," his colleague notes. "The resources derived from literature were uncertain and unsatisfactory. His influential friends paid him cheering visits in the gloomy office where he leavened his daily loaves; and at his desk, between the exacting pages of the too literal ledger, many a couplet cropped out, and the outlines of now famous sketches were faintly limned. His friends welcome dinner hour approached, making excuses to himself for himself and conjuring up that hitherto unsuggested "guide."

With his diffident nature he no doubt approached his native State and the great city of New York with some misgivings. But the self-imposed wanderings of the enterprising young Argonaut were at an end: his Golden Fleece had been won and must be brought "home"—there to be beholden by all men.

CHAPTER IV

FROM PACIFIC TO ATLANTIC SHORES

I HAVE before me a copy of the London *Daily News* of March 21, 1871, which at the time of its appearance so amused Bret Harte that he (generally very indifferent to such matters) always kept it. He liked the good temper of the banter to which he was subjected, and he was greatly diverted to find himself such a celebrity. He was neither flattered nor gratified; in another mood he might have been annoyed. As it happened the leading article that dealt with him tickled his fancy, and he liked laughingly to recall its memory.

This is what the *Daily News* said:—

"America has a new star. The planet which Tycho Brahé saw suddenly kindled in the heavens and gradually increasing to the size of Jupiter has been questioned by more recent astronomers; but the full-orbed fame of Mr. Bret Harte among his countrymen comes to us in no questionable shape. The East and the West contend for the reflected rays of his celebrity; cities dispute for the honour of his presence; Chicago beguiles him from San Francisco, New York snatches him from Chicago, and Boston plots deeply his abstraction from New York. His lightest movement is chronicled in every paper, and where he stops for a few days a kind of 'Bret Harte Circular' appears in the daily press.

"'Mr. F. Bret Harte arrived in this city about eleven o'clock, Saturday forenoon, and went immediately to the residence of Mr. W. D. Howells in Cambridge. Mr. Harte is accompanied by his family, consisting of his wife and two children.' 'Mr. Bret Harte on his first day in Boston dined with the Saturday Club, where he met amongst others Louis Agassiz, Henry W. Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Richard H. Dana, junior.' 'Mr. Bret Harte visited the Consumptives' Home fair yesterday accompanied by Mr. James T. Fields.' 'Bret Harte returns to New York from Boston to-morrow (1st) and goes at once at his work of writing for Eastern magazines. Probably his first new work will appear in *Harper*.' These are items from our Boston files of two or three days, and similar passages have attended the young author's triumphal progress through various cities from the Pacific to the Atlantic. The Americans may at least claim that in this case they have been the first to recognise their own great man. It was once asked in derision, Who reads an American book? The question is now repeated only as a note of triumph. But since Sydney Smith's phrase has become its own refutation, there have not been wanting those who, in the spirit of it, have asserted that America has not known its great writers until they had been recognised by the Old World, and the earliest fame of Irving, Emerson, and Hawthorne, has been claimed as European. Whatever may be said on this very doubtful theory, certain it is that in the present instance America has got far ahead of us, for we fear that not a few of the most intelligent English readers will be found asking, Who is Mr. Bret Harte?—and what has he said or done?

"We answer, he is a young author who has succeeded in making all America burst into inextinguishable laughter. He has done this not by ingenuity of misspelling, nor by grotesqueness of literary grimace, but by a series of really humorous works, capped by a local satire which has raised the cachinnations into a hearty roar that can only be described as national. Though Mr. Harte's universal popularity is in his own country recent, and has not found us on this side of the water sufficiently released from the heaviness of the tragedy at our doors to swell it, yet there are some in this country, as in America, whose divining rods search out genius as far as California, and distinguish it from the base ores, as the miners, with whom Mr. Harte is so familiar, their nuggets of gold. There have been readers here also of the excellent *Overland Monthly*, whose appearance in California was one sign of the disappearance of chaos and of the beginning of a higher social stratification. They have marked in that periodical the exquisite sketches of life, portraits of character, curious stories—now replete with drollery, now deepening with pathetic touches—which already announced that a mind of singular power and originality had begun its task in that far-off country. Now and then too there appeared therein poems, with a certain untamed flavour about them like the Catawba grape, and an earnest sympathetic tone toward the wild features of occidental scenery, as if the poet found in the mighty pines and heights something adapted to the climbing of his vague ideals. These poems have been published, but they are studies rather than complete works of art, and have probably not contributed the most to Mr. Bret Harte's present popularity. The prose sketches collected under the name of the most important of them, 'The Luck of Roaring Camp,' constitute by far the best specimens of American humour which have appeared since *The Bigelow Papers*, and show a variety of ability not at all equalled by their author's old friend Artemus Ward. But there is about these sketches a subtlety, a keenness of satire, an impatience of humbug and meanness which, while they would naturally earn for their writer the fraternal welcome among thinkers and scholars which he has received, could hardly alone have commanded the attention of vast populations. This achievement[1] was the work of a happy hour, and might easily have seemed to some one of his idlest; but it really was one of those works of pure art for which a long training is necessary, and which suggest as their parallel the touch at which some common substance flashes to its crystal."

---

[1] **Needless to say the writer alludes here to Bret Harte's bugbear, "The Heathen Chinee."**

Judging from what he told me in after years, I do not think that the successful author, as he travelled from city to city to the accompaniment of a constant ovation, was thinking so much of the fame which he had achieved and which was now being thrust upon him—of the passing events of his journey, or of the work that lay before him at its end—as of the memories he was leaving behind him. No doubt it was with true regret that he quitted the editorial chair of his beloved *Overland Monthly*, and it was not without a pang that he resigned the Professorship of Literature in the University of California, to which he had recently been appointed.

His mind dwelt wistfully too on his first Californian home in Oakland, where, with his own hands, he had made a garden fence with laths laid close together in a small diamond pattern. My kind friend Mr. Stoddard has written me about that pleasant and peaceful spot, and of the bungalow that was sheltered by the largest "live oak" in the vicinity. Bret Harte had taken great pride in his handiwork, and his fence was always fresh with whitewash. Oakland, with its bungalow and fenced-in garden, had been his starting-point, and, ever mistrustful of himself, he now wondered if he would not have been happier if he had adapted himself to the work that then lay within his reach, instead of embarking on the uncertain seas of authorship.

But he had to accept the position he had made for himself, and to bow to a reception of which the greatest of authors might have been proud. That in his heart of heart he took a proper pride in his literary triumphs is beyond question; but it is equally certain that he could not bear to hear them proclaimed from the housetops. On such occasions he longed for the seclusion of the basement; and this earnest desire for self-effacement never left him. It did not, however, stand in the way of his keen enjoyment of congenial society, or his delight in meeting the distinguished people whose work he admired. All that he asked was that he and his own work should not be the sole topic of conversation.

His life in New York was naturally less varied, and so, in a way, less interesting than it had been in California. The demand for his stories kept his pen constantly at work, and in his hours of relaxation he formed many new friendships. It has been said that his residence in the great American city added little to his literary skill or to his store of literary material. The fact is that his literary skill had been perfected before he left California, and his old material was in such constant request that he had no need to seek anything new. The public wanted to hear more from him concerning the gold miners, their associates, and environment, and the publishers had to attend to the wants of the public.

That he longed for some of his old friends is certain. When he heard that Noah Brooks, his colleague on the *Overland*, was coming to live in New York, he said gleefully: "He and I will found the Society of the Escaped Californians." Mr. Brooks says that he found his friend "a little bewildered by the strangeness of his new surroundings; and he was puzzled to decide whether he should venture into these new fields;" and, he adds, "he came to the wise conclusion that his best work was to be done with the bulky portfolio of mental photographs which he had gathered in California. And so he returned to the old trails; and in the old trails he remained to the day of his death."

Very wisely, too, he determined through the hot summer months he would always go with his wife and family into some country home. His first haunt of this description was Newport on the sea coast, and there many happy months were passed. In a similar way several summers were spent at Morristown, New Jersey, in a beautiful old house associated with the Washington family. There the beautiful tale entitled "Thankful Blossom" was written. This, of course, was a distinct departure from the "Argonaut" stories, and since it became one of his great successes it proves that Bret Harte, if he had been given rein, could very easily get away from his accustomed groove. By the way, I have often heard it said the name of the sweet maiden—Thankful Blossom—is more far-fetched than fanciful. As a matter of fact it was the true name of an ancestress of the Harte family. No doubt the story gained some inspiration from the fact that it was written on the historic scene of Washington's headquarters, and that the great General must have experienced the bitter winter so graphically described in it. I believe I am right in saying that partly through Bret Harte's influence the interesting old house to which I have referred was purchased by the State, and is now most carefully preserved. Another favourite warm weather resort was Cohasset. There, one year, he found himself the neighbour of Lawrence Barrett, the eminent actor, and of Stuart Robson, the well-known comedian, for whom he was writing the play called "Two Men of Sandy Bar." Barrett took immense interest in the piece, and as it progressed used to read it aloud to the Harte family and their friends. It is safe to assume that on those occasions the author was not present!

He must at that time have been one of the busiest of men, for, in addition to his play, he was at work upon his one great attempt at a prolonged story, or novel, "Gabriel Conroy."

Does the reader remember the graphic opening pages of that striking romance?

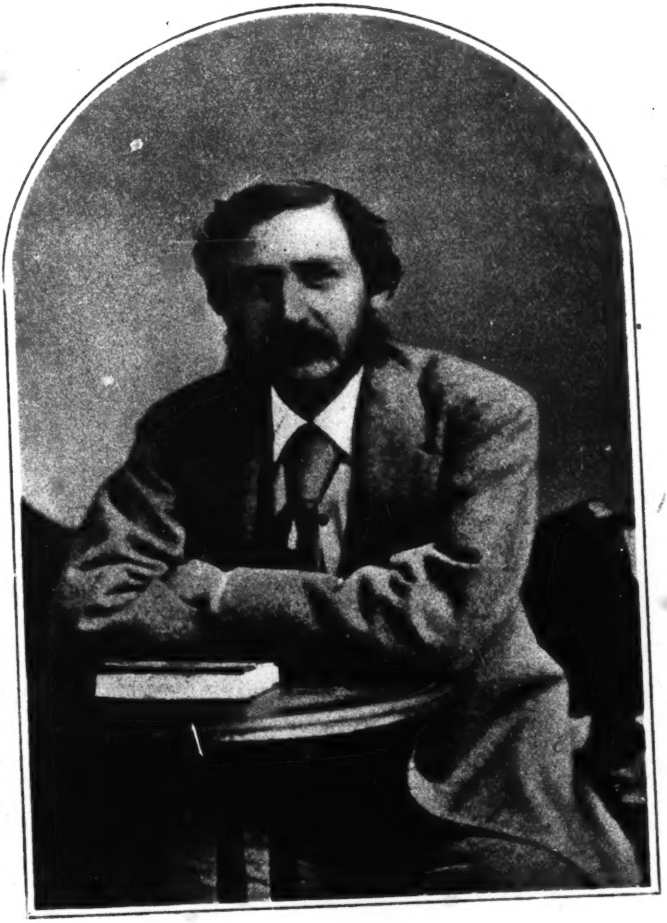
"Snow. Everywhere. As far as the eye could reach—fifty miles looking southward from the highest white peak—filling ravines and gulches, and dropping from the walls of cañons in white shrouds like drifts, fashioning the dividing ridge into the likeness of a monstrous grave, hiding the bases of giant pines, and completely covering young trees and larches, riming with porcelain the bowl-like edges of still, cold lakes, and undulating in motionless white billows to the edge of the distant horizon. Snow lying everywhere over the Californian Sierras on the 15th day of March 1848, and still falling.

"It had been snowing for ten days; snowing in finely granulated powder, in damp, spongy flakes, in thin feathery plumes; snowing from a leaden sky steadily, snowing fiercely, shaken out of purple-black clouds in white, flocculent masses, or dropping in long level lines, like white lances from the tumbled and broken heavens. But always silently! The woods were so choked with it, the branches were so laden with it—it had so permeated, filled and possessed earth and sky; it had so cushioned and muffled the ringing rocks and echoing hills that all sound was deadened. The strongest gust, the fiercest blast awoke no sigh or complaint from the snow-packed rigid files of forest. There was no cracking of bough nor crackle of underbrush; the overladen branches of pine and fir yielded and gave way without a sound. The silence was vast, measureless, complete! Nor could it be said that any outward sign of life or motion changed the fixed outlines of this stricken landscape. Above, there was no play of light and shadow, only the occasional deepening of storm or night. Below, no bird winged its flight across the white expanse, no beast haunted the confines of the backwoods; whatever of brute nature might once have inhabited these solitudes had long since flown down to the lowlands. There was no track or imprint;

whatever foot might have left its mark upon this waste, each succeeding snowfall obliterated all trace or record. Every morning the solitude was virgin and unbroken; and a million tiny feet had stepped into the track and filled it up."

Well, it is a noteworthy and curious fact that this realistic picture of pitiless snow and biting cold was conjured up and written down on one of the hottest days of a notoriously hot summer, and while the author was actually fanning himself. But Bret Harte never depended on his surroundings for his inspiration. He could always draw on his marvellous memory, and it never failed to respond to his call. Once I found him writing in London with his house enveloped in one of those pea-soup coloured fogs (one of Mr. Guppy's "London particulars") which take rank among the most depressing of earthly things; but he told me that, being in the heart of a story, it mattered little to him, and that he could picture to himself the grand cañons and mighty pine-trees, the purple Sierras and the dusty plains of California, as if they were before him; nay, that he could even gain exhilaration by imagining the spicy scents of the fir-trees, and the purity of the invigorating air of the land that formed the background for his new set of characters.

Another favourite place of his was Lenox, and here we get an interesting peep at him through the "Records" of Frances Anne Kemble (Mrs. Butler), the renowned English actress. That graceful writer has left a pretty word-picture of Lenox.



Bret Harte (circa 1871).

[*To face p.* 126.

"It is astonishing how like Switzerland it is!" she says; "not the Alpine magnificent side of Switzerland, but the whole of the valley of the lake of Neufchâtel, looking towards the Jura. It is like the neighbourhood of La Jonchere and all that family of Jura valleys. The village of Lenox itself has immensely improved. The beautiful trees along its two streets, which cross each other at right angles on the top of a steep hill, have grown tall and thick, so that in looking down on the small table-land, where the houses are clustered together for a considerable height, on which stands the oldest village church (whose clock, with which I endowed it, still shows the inhabitants the time of day), the whole place is embowered in foliage, and with the deep valleys below it, and the blue distant hills rising up almost to mountains beyond, is a most charming piece of scenery."

As the readers of the fascinating "Records" are aware, they chiefly took the form of letters. Here is the one that contains the allusion to Bret Harte:—

"LENOX, *October 6th*, 1875.

"MY DEAREST H——,—You will learn where I am by the date of my letter in this formerly familiar dwelling of mine, whither I came to-day from Boston, where I parted with M——, who is going to spend a few days at Newport, which I shall pass here, after which we meet again at Boston, and return together to Philadelphia. I shall be away from York Farm about ten days, and your letters will not be forwarded to me, as I had much rather wait a few days to receive them than run the risk of losing them involved in their following me through two or three American post offices.

"F—— and Mr. L. are staying here, and I knew my coming would be a pleasant surprise to her. There are still some old friends of mine here, and several younger members of the Sedgwick family, to whom I am much attached, and whom I am very glad to see again, and I am charmed to be once more in the picturesque country of which I am so fond, and where I have spent so many happy days.

"The autumn is now in its full beauty, and nothing can exceed the splendour of the many-tinted foliage — this Joseph's coat given to the youngest of worlds, or rather, of nations (for this world, science says, is the older of the two). The weather, too, is exquisite, wonderfully brilliant and soft in its radiance, and though delightfully warm and sunny, not in the least oppressive. This is the only pleasant season of the American year, unequalled, as the Italian spring in its way. It is really delightful, and often protracted with us in Pennsylvania till the end of November; not up here, though, where it is every now and then already slightly chilly, and ere long will be unpleasantly so.

"I am tired, dearest H——, with my six hours' railway journey, and will bid you good-night, as it is just twelve o'clock. I do not like to think that it will be a whole week before I hear from you. God bless you, dear.—Ever as ever yours,

FANNY."

"During this visit of mine to Lenox I made the acquaintance of Mr. Bret Harte, with whose original stories I had been deeply interested and delighted. He was staying in the same hotel with us, and did us the favour of spending an evening with us. He reminded me a good deal of our old pirate and bandit friend, Trelawny, in his appearance, though the latter was an almost orientally dark-complexioned man, and Mr. Bret Harte was comparatively fair. They were both tall, well-made men of fine figure; both, too, were handsome, with a peculiar expression of face, which suggested small success to any one who might engage in personal conflict with them. I had been told that Mr. Bret Harte was an agent for some Eastern Express Company, travelling for whom in the savage western wilderness, among the worst kind of savages, the outcasts of civilisation, he must often have carried considerable sums of money about his person, and always have ridden his long lonely journey with his life in his hand.

"He told us of one of his striking experiences, and his telling it made it singularly impressive. He had arrived at night at a solitary house of call on his way, absolutely isolated and far distant from any other dwelling — a sort of rough, roadside tavern, known and resorted to by the wanderers in that region. Here he was to pass the night. The master of the house, to whom he was known, answered his question as to whether any one else was there by giving the name of a notorious desperado, who had committed some recent outrage, and in search of whom the wild justices — the lynchers of the wilderness — were scouring the district. This *guest*, the landlord said, was hiding in the house, and was to leave it (if he was still alive) the next day. Bret Harte, accustomed to rough company, went quietly to bed and to sleep, but was aroused in the middle of the night by the arrival of a party of horsemen, who called up the master of the house and inquired if the man they were in pursuit of was with him. Upon receiving his repeated positive assurance that he was not, they remounted their horses and resumed their search.

"At break of day Bret Harte took his departure, finding that for the first part of his journey he was to have the hiding hero of the night (thief or murderer, probably) for his companion, to whom, on his departure, the master of the house gave the most reiterated, precise, and minute directions as to the *only* road by which it would be possible that he could escape his pursuers, Bret Harte meanwhile listening to these directions as if they were addressed to himself. They rode silently for a short time and then the fugitive began to talk — not about s escape, not about the danger of the past night, t about the crime he had committed, but about *ickens's last story*, in which he expressed such an ger and enthusiastic interest, that he would have ssed the turning in the road by which he was have m[illegible]is escape if Bret Harte had not inted it out to him, saying, 'That is your way.' wish I could remember what story of Dickens's it as, and that he could have been made acquainted ith this incident, worthy of a record in one of his oks.

"It is perhaps a cause of some slight monotony Bret Harte's admirably touching and powerful ctures of the life and dwellers in the western stricts, that his men and women are almost universally and inevitably male or female good-for-ughts.' It is part of his great merit to make e feel how much good may remain in 'good-for-ughts.'"

In speaking of Bret Harte as "an agent for some stern Express Company," Mrs. Butler was of course inking of what she had heard of his earlier experi-ces. The "Dickens story" referred to was "Our utual Friend," which was first published in stimu-ing but tantalising monthly numbers. Probably e unhappy criminal had read some of the earliest of ese, and was quite as anxious to know the end the story as he was concerned about the reatened and imminent horrible climax of his own ckless career.

But besides writing diligently, making new friends, and accustoming himself to fresh surroundings, Bret Harte had another matter to occupy time and attention in his changed life. When he first came to New York it was suggested that he, the literary celebrity of the day, should lecture on his Californian experiences. That his hatred of publicity prompted him to reject the proposal may readily be imagined, but the offers made to him were tempting; he was not the man to selfishly shirk a duty, and, yielding to the persuasion of his friends, he reluctantly consented. Happily his appearance in a new character at once commanded success. That he felt this, and appreciated it, is shown in the following letter to his wife:—

"MONONGHAELA HOUSE, PITTSBURG,
"*January 9th*, 1872, 2.50 P.M.

"MY DEAR NAN,—I telegraphed you twice from Washington and once to-day from Pittsburg. And I now send you many and happier returns of your birthday, dear little woman. I've gone along thus far and very fairly and without delay. My Washington lecture was crowded; the audience almost as quick and responsive as the Boston folk, and the committeemen, to my great delight, told me that they made money by me. You will be sorry to hear that I felt dreadfully lonely on my Washington trip, and you will be sorrier to hear, you infamous woman, that my luncheon was mitigated by meeting Miss

Binny Banks and her mother in the train. You may remember that I met Miss Banks at Burlingam's little dinner—but I don't know that I told you that she was *lovely*. She and 'her ma' went with me to the lecture.

"I called on Charlton at the British Minister's and had some talk with Sir Edward Thornton, which I have no doubt will materially affect the foreign policy of England. If I have said anything to promote a better feeling between the countries I am willing he should get the credit of it.

"I took a carriage and went alone to the Capitol of my country. I had expected to be disappointed, but not agreeably. It is really a noble building—worthy of the Republic—vast, magnificent, sometimes a little weak in detail, but in intent always high toned, grand and large principled. I felt very proud until I looked in upon Congress in Session; then it was very trying to compare the house with its tenants.

"How you would have enjoyed this trip with me!

"Finding that I would be two or three hours in Baltimore on my way to Pittsburg, I telegraphed to Chiss Mayer to meet and sup with me. He met me at the depot; we went to 'Guy's'—a famous restaurant—and had a nice supper, and then we spent the last half-hour of my limit at Branty Mayer's house with your cousins. 'Miss Kate' and 'Jinny' were on their way to a party, and there were one or two other sisters whom I had not seen before. They all regretted you were not with me, and made me promise to bring you in early spring to spend a few days. All that I saw of the road between Baltimore and Pittsburg was beautiful. Its scenery is noted, I believe, but in the early grey morning it came upon me, with its great white distances of Allyghannies and rivers as a special revelation. We passed the 'blue Juniata,' where you remember the 'bright Alfaretta' roamed and wept. The spot where she wept is plainly to be seen, and is still damp.

"I am looking from the windows of my hotel on the Monongahela river, with all sorts of queer flat boats and barges passing and repassing. How you would have enjoyed it! The mail leaves in a few minutes. I conclude you are better or you would telegraph me. Kiss the chickens for me, Nan, and look for the safe return speedily of your own

FRANK."

The following letter from a friend by whom he set great store vastly encouraged him:—

"148 CHARLES STREET, BOSTON,
"*Sunday, Dec.* 15*th*, 1872.

"MY DEAR HARTE,—Only a word or two to say you can have no idea how great a hit your lecture made here. I have met, since that auspicious evening, many men and women who heard it, and they are all of one opinion—that you cannot be beaten! We had a lot of people here last night (we are always 'at home' on Saturday night), and most of our callers were in the Temple when you stood up for to speak. I never heard warmer encomiums from every mother's son and daughter of them. They fairly boiled over with delight as they recalled your numerous felicitous passages. 'They had never thought of Bret Harte as a *capital speaker!*' In short they swore so good a lecture, so delightful a speaker, had not been produced on that platform for many a year!

"In the present condition of this lurid and small-poxy city I feared your audience would not be of the kind best adapted to hear the best. But you had tip-toppers among your listeners—artists, clergymen—chaps with brains, sir, in every walk of life crowded your benches and applauded your wisdom and humour.

"You will make hoards of sequins by that production, and I advise you to look sharp and see that your fee is as high as that of any old and popular stager in the country. Regards to Mrs. Harte.—Cordially yours, J. T. FIELDS."

This was very pleasant hearing, and from his audiences' point of view all, throughout the tour, was *couleur de rose.* But of course all that glittered was not gold. Bret Harte always hated the platform, and naturally was from time to time troubled with the woes that beset the little world behind the scenes even of the lecturer's modest desk, with lights, manuscript, and glass of water for stage properties.

Thus he revealed some of his sorrows to his wife :—

"To Mrs. ANNA HARTE, No. 45 Fifth Avenue,
New York City, U.S.A.

"MONTREAL, *March* 25*th*, 1873.

"MY DEAR NAN,—I telegraphed my arrival in Ottawa on the 21st and to-day my arrival here. But I did not write because I really did not know, and do not know now, whether I shall not have to give up the Canadian engagement entirely.

"In Ottawa I lectured twice, but the whole thing was a pecuniary failure. There was scarcely enough money to pay expenses, and of course nothing to pay me with. —— has no money of his own, and although he is blamable for not thoroughly examining the ground before bringing me to Ottawa, he was evidently so completely disappointed and miserable that I could not find it in my heart to upbraid him. So I simply told him that unless the Montreal receipts were sufficient to pay me for my lecture there, and a reasonable part of the money due me from Ottawa, I would throw the whole thing up. To-night will in all probability settle the question. Of course there are those who tell me privately that he is no manager, but I really do not see but that he has done all that he could, and that his only fault is in his sanguine and hopeful nature.

"I did not want to write this disappointment to you as long as there was some prospect of better things. You can imagine, however, how I feel at this cruel loss of time and money—to say nothing of my health, which is still so poor. I had almost recovered from my cold, but at lecturing at Ottawa at the Skating Rink, a hideous, dismal damp barn—the only available place in town—I caught a fresh cold and have been coughing badly ever since. And you can well imagine that my business annoyances do not add greatly to my sleep or appetite.

"Apart from this the people of Ottawa have received me very kindly. They have vied with each other in social attention, and if I had been like John Gilpin, 'on pleasure bent,' they would have made my visit a success. The Governor-General of Canada and his wife—the Earl and Countess of Dufferin—invited me to stay with them at their seat, Rideau Hall, and I spent Sunday and Monday with them. Sir John and Lady Macdonald were also most polite and courteous.

"I shall telegraph you to-morrow if I intend to return at once. Don't let this worry you, but kiss the children for me and hope for the best. I would send you some money but *there isn't any to send*, and maybe I shall only bring back myself.—Your affectionate **FRANK.**

"*P.S.—26th.*

"**DEAR NAN**,—I did not send this yesterday, waiting to find the result of last night's lecture. It was a *fair* house and —— this morning paid me 150 dollars, of which I send you the greater part. I lecture again to-night, with fair prospects, and he is to pay something on account of the Ottawa engagement besides the fee for that night. I will write again from Ogdensburg.—Always yours, FRANK."

Herein lies a grievance in another and more diverting direction :—

"For Mrs. BRET HARTE,
45 Fifth Avenue, New York.

"ST. LOUIS, *Oct. 19th*, 1873, *Sunday*, P.M.

"MY DEAR ANNA,—As my engagement is not until the 21st at Topeka, Kansas, I lie over here until to-morrow morning in preference to spending the extra day in Kansas. I've accepted the invitation of Mr. Hodges, one of the managers of the lecture course, to stay at his house. He is a good fellow, with the usual American small family and experimental housekeeping, and the quiet and change from the hotel is very refreshing to me. They let me stay in my own room—which by the way is hung with the chintz of our 49th Street house—and don't bother me with company. So I was very good to-day and went to church. There was fine singing. The contralto sang your best sentences from the *Te Deum*, 'We believe that Thou shalt come,' &c., &c., to the same minor chant that I used to admire.

"The style of criticism that my lecture—or rather myself as a lecturer—has received, of which I send you a specimen, culminated this morning in an editorial in the *Republican*, which I shall send you, but have not with me at present. I certainly never expected to be mainly criticised for being *what I am not*, a handsome fop; but this assertion is at the bottom of all the criticism. They may be right—I dare say they are—in asserting that I am no orator, have no special faculty for speaking, no fire, no dramatic earnestness or expression, but when they intimate that I am running on my good looks—save the mark! I confess I get hopelessly furious. You will be amused to hear that my gold 'studs' have again become 'diamonds,' my worn-out shirts 'faultless linen,' my haggard face that of a 'Spanish-looking exquisite,' my habitual quiet and 'used up' way, 'gentle and eloquent languor.' But you will be a little astonished to know that the hall I spoke in was worse than Springfield, and *notoriously* so—that the people seemed genuinely pleased, that the lecture inaugurated the 'Star' course very handsomely, and that it was the first of the first series of lectures ever delivered in St. Louis.

"My dates in Kansas are changed thus, Topeka 21st, Achinson 22nd, Lawrence 23rd, Kansas City 24th, but they are not distant from each other, and I shall probably get any letters without trouble.

"I hope to hear that you have got a house and are settled, in your next letter. I shall write again this week, probably from Kansas City.—Your affectionate

Frank."

The allusion to the *Te Deum* had connection with Mrs. Bret Harte's beautiful singing voice. Her rendering of sacred music was one of her husband's delights.

The promised letter from Kansas soon came :—

"For Mrs. Bret Harte,
Box 570 P.O., Marietown, New Jersey.

"Lawrence, Kansas, *October* 23rd, 1873.

"My dear Anna,—I left Topeka, which sounds like a name Franky might have invented, early yesterday morning, but did not reach Achinson, only sixty miles distant, until seven o'clock at night—an hour before the lecture. The engine as usual had broken down, and left me at four o'clock fifteen miles from Achinson, on the edge of a bleak prairie with only one house in sight. But I got a saddle-horse—there was no vehicle to be had—and strapping my lecture and blanket to my back I gave my valise to a little yellow boy—who looked like a dirty terra-cotta figure—with orders to follow me on another horse, and so tore off towards Achinson. I got there in time; the boy reached there two hours after.

"I make no comment; you can imagine the half-sick, utterly disgusted man who glared at that audience over his desk that night, and d—d them inwardly in his heart. And yet it was a good audience, thoroughly refined and appreciative, and very glad to see me. I was very anxious about this lecture, for it was a venture of my own, and I had been told that Achinson was a rough place—energetic but coarse. I think I wrote you from St. Louis that I had found there were only three actual engagements in Kansas, and that my list which gave Kansas City twice was a mistake. So I accepted to take Achinson. I made a hundred dollars by the lecture, and it is yours, for yourself, Nan, to buy 'Minxes' with, if you want, for it is over and above the amount Eliza and I footed up on my lecture list. I shall send it to you as soon as the bulk of the pressing claims are settled.

"Everything thus far has gone well; besides my lecture of to-night I have one more to close Kansas, and then I go on to St. Joseph.

"I've been greatly touched with the very honest and sincere liking which these Western people seem to have for me. They seem to have read everything I have written—and appear to appreciate the best. Think of a rough fellow in a bearskin robe and blue shirt repeating to me 'Crucificiar de Aeguiallo.' Their strange good taste and refinement under that rough exterior—even their tact—is very wonderful to me. They are 'Kentucks' and 'Dick Bullens' with twice the refinement and tenderness of their Californian brethren.

"And of course, as in all such places, the women contrast poorly with the men — even in feminine qualities. Somehow a man here may wear fustian and glaring colours and paper collars and yet keep his gentleness and delicacy, but a woman in glaring 'Dolly Vardens' and artificial flowers changes natures with him at once.

"I've seen but one that interested me—an old negro wench. She was talking and laughing outside my door the other evening, but her laugh was so sweet and unctuous and musical—so full of breadth and goodness that I went outside and talked to her while she was scrubbing the stones. She laughed as a canary bird sings — because she couldn't help it. It did me a world of good, for it was before the lecture, at twilight, when I am very blue and low tuned. She had been a slave.

"I expected to have heard from you here. I've nothing from you or Eliza since last Friday when I got yours of the 12th. I shall not write again until I hear further. I shall direct this to Eliza's care, as I do not even know where you are.—Your affectionate FRANK."

It was a hard-working time, and no doubt the anxiety of the evening's lecture did much to destroy his day's enjoyment; but in the course of his wanderings he saw much that interested him, he was pleased at the heartiness of his receptions, and was without doubt glad to add grist to his mill. His chief annoyance was that his frequent journeys sorely interfered with the literary work that formed the backbone of his present income. In the following letter he refers to Stuart Robson, the actor, who was to appear as Colonel Starbottle in his "Two Men of Sandy Bar." Of the production and fate of the play, of which great things were expected, I shall speak in another chapter.

"To Mrs. Bret Harte.

"Berkely Springs, Va., *Saturday.*

"My dear Nan,—Pellis said he kept my note until he reached Washington instead of posting it at Baltimore, so that it must have reached you two days late. I telegraphed yesterday, thinking you might be worried.

"I hardly believe I shall ever be able to leave Virginia. At least if I do I shall come back here instead of going to Europe. *Such people* as I have seen! Imagine my sitting down to dinner with a gentleman in the dress of the early century—ruffles, even *bag-wig* complete—a gentleman who has visited these Springs for the last forty years! Who remembers 'Maddison, Sir,' and 'Mousie, Sir,' and asked me what I thought of the poems of Matthew Prior! I have seen people that I believed never existed off the stage — gouty old uncles in white flannel; stiff old dowagers who personify the centennial. And all this undiscovered country within 400 miles of New York. I never had such a chance in my life, and I look back upon poor Colonel Starbottle as an utter failure. If I could dress Robson and get him to speak as I heard the real Virginia Colonel Starbottle speak yesterday, I could make him famous.

"I shall return Monday or Tuesday next, I think; until then I hope you will not be worried. I am better physically and I think in every way. Don't mind my incoherency. I am writing just now to

keep up with the 'post-boy'—a real 'post-boy,' who is to pass here on his pony in five minutes.—.
Your affectionate FRANK."

Later a warning note of coming trouble was sounded. In New York and its vicinity Bret Harte, with an increased family and consequently increased expenses, was living at a far higher rate than in San Francisco. The welcome guest of every one, he was shown much and profuse hospitality, and, ever open-handed and generous, he loved to return it. But after a time the position became a source of anxiety to him. He bethought himself of his beloved Æsop and the fable that told how: "An earthen pot, and one of brass, standing together on the river's brink, were both carried away by the flowing in of the tide. The earthen pot showed some uneasiness, as fearing he should be broken; but his companion of brass bid him be under no apprehensions, for that he would take care of him. 'Oh,' replied the other, 'keep as far off as ever you can, I entreat you; it is you I am most afraid of, for whether the stream dashes you against me, or me against you, I am sure to be the sufferer, and therefore, I beg of you, do not let us come near to one another.'"

How quaint is the "application" appended to that famous old fable, and how fond he was of it, as he was, indeed, of each page of Æsop and everything associated with him: "A man of a moderate fortune, who is contented with what he has, and

Bret Harte (circa 1876).

[To face p. 144.

finds he can live happily upon it, should take care not to hazard and expose his felicity by consorting with the great and the powerful. People of equal conditions may float down the current of life without hurting each other; but it is a point of some difficulty to steer one's course in the company of the great so as to escape without a bulge. One would not choose to have one's little country-box situated in the neighbourhood of a very great man, for whether I ignorantly trespass upon him or he knowingly encroaches upon me, I only am like to be the sufferer. I can neither entertain nor play with him upon his own terms; for that which is moderation and diversion to him, in me would be extravagance and ruin."

No doubt at the time of which I am writing Bret Harte was worried with the idea that he was somewhat dangerously drifting, and he had no desire to be in the position of the earthen pot, but he loved the society of his friends, and could not bear to seem indifferent to the great kindness shown him.

But that his mind was troubled is shown by the following letter to his wife:—

"Mrs. Bret Harte, Sea Cliff House,
Sea Cliff, L.I.

"*Thursday Night.*

"Thank you, dear Nan, for your kind, hopeful letter. I *have* been very sick; very much disappointed, but I'm better now, and am only waiting some money to return. I ought to have, for the work that I have done, more than would help us out of our difficulties. But it doesn't come, and even the money I've expected from the *capital* for my story is signed by *its* creditors. That hope and the expectations I had from the paper and Piatt in the future amount to nothing. I have found that it is bankrupt.

"Can you wonder, Nan, that I have kept this from you? You have so hard a time of it there, and I cannot bear to have you worried if there is the least hope of a change in my affairs as they look, day by day. Piatt has been gone nearly a month, was expected to return every day, and only yesterday did I know positively of his inability to fulfil his promises. —— came here three days ago, and in a very few moments I learned from him that I need expect nothing for the particular service I had done him. I've been vilified and abused in the papers for having received compensation for my services, when really and truly I have only received *less* than I should have got from any magazine or newspaper for my story.

"I sent you the fifty dollars by Mr. D——, because I knew you would be in immediate need, and there is no telegraph transfer office on Long Island. It was the only fifty I have made since I've been here.

"I am waiting to hear from Osgood regarding an advance on that wretched story. He writes me he does not quite like it. I shall probably hear from him to-night. When the money comes I shall come with it.

"God bless you and keep you and the children safe for the sake of FRANK."

Not unnaturally debts had been incurred, and not only did these cause him anxiety, but exaggerated reports concerning them angered him intensely. In this connection Mr. Noah Brooks relates the following story. A rich man in New York, a banker and broker, with an ambition to be considered a patron of the arts and literature, made much of the new literary lion, and from him Bret Harte, regarding the whole matter from a banking point of view, obtained advances of some five hundred dollars, in sums varying from five dollars to fifty dollars at a time. One New Year's Day Bret Harte, in as much wrath as he was ever capable of showing, handed a friend a note from the rich banker, in which the writer, who was not famous for being a generous giver, reminded him that this was the season of the year when business men endeavoured to enter a new era with a clean page in the ledger; and that, in order to enable his literary friend to do that, he returned to him the *I.O.U.'s* which, by way of security, had been signed from time to time. "Damn his impudence," exclaimed poor Bret Harte. "What are you going to do about it?" asked the friend. "*Going* to do about it?" was the reply, with much emphasis on the first word. "*Going!* I have made a new note for the full amount of these, and have sent it to him with an intimation that I never allow pecuniary matters to trespass on the domain of friendship."

"He was utterly," Mr. Brooks continues, "destitute of what is sometimes called the 'money sense.' He could not drive a bargain, and he was an easy mark for any man who could. Consequently he was continually involved in troubles that he might have escaped with a little more financial shrewdness. Once he lectured in Boston with a bailiff, or deputy-sheriff, sitting in the ante-room near an open door so that Bret Harte could not escape him. A literary friend good-naturedly rallied him on the situation, and the persecuted lecturer, laughing heartily, said, 'Yes, that's it; we can see it all now—the Fleet Prison, with Goldsmith, Johnson, and all the rest of the old masters in a bunch!'

"Once when we were waiting on Broadway for a stage to take him down town, he said, as the lumbering vehicle hove in sight, 'Lend me a quarter; I haven't money enough to pay my stage fare.' Two or three weeks later, when I had forgotten the incident, we stood in the same place waiting for the same stage, and Bret Harte, putting a quarter of a dollar in my hand, said: 'I owe you a quarter, and there it is. You hear men say that I never pay my debts, but' (this with a chuckle) 'you can deny the slander.'"

Another story was to the effect that while he lived at Morristown he retained the postage stamps sent to him for his autographs, and these applications were so numerous that with them he paid his butcher's bill; but that the slander had been denied *on the authority of the butcher!*

It is said that when he heard this invention he laughed more heartily than any one; but though the humour of a particular *canard* may have tickled him, his sensitive nature winced under such implied slurs. His pen had made him one of the celebrities of the day, and though he was surrounded by many who could appreciate him at his true worth, he had to listen to the ever-existing crowd—existing, and certainly not diminishing, in every clime—of those who take an unholy joy in throwing stones. He who never cast a stone himself could not understand it.

As, by the malicious, these rumours of American unpaid debts have been revived from time to time and require dispelling, I shall quote Mr. Joaquin Miller, who, writing of Bret Harte after his death, and speaking with authority, says:—

"It was published up and down" (in California) "for years that he left a lot of bills unpaid. When I returned to settle down here in the early eighties I found these stories furiously revived. I denied them. Then it was published that he had left a lot of unpaid bills in New York also. I wrote to John Hay, then editing *The Tribune*. Hay assured me that he did not owe one dollar in New York; that he was a man of singularly strict sense of honour in money matters; that he had once offered to assist him when ill in Washington, but that Bret Harte had seemed so hurt at the idea that he was sorry he had tried to help him. . . . Yes, our gifted Secretary of State knew Bret Harte a heap better than any one else, and, as you can see, loved him and trusted him entirely.

"I may mention that after I had the letter from Hay I advertised here in St. Louis for any and all bills against Bret Harte, promising to pay in full without regard to the statute of limitations. Only one man, a printer, put in any sort of a claim, and this one man's own statement was to the effect that Bret Harte paid the most of the bill, claiming that was all he had agreed to pay. Sic!"

In face of such evidence as this surely the viper—slander—may be ruthlessly trodden under foot.

But I am afraid that the poor author knew that he was calumniated, and that it sorely vexed him as he incessantly toiled with his pen and grappled with his arrears. I believe he was always well paid for his work—or that at any rate he got the full price of his day. In talking of these times to me he never complained on this score, though he has often said that he got better remuneration for his work in England.

Of the writer's emoluments Grant Allen has bitterly declared: "Brain for brain, in no market can you sell your abilities to such poor advantage.

Don't take to literature if you've capital enough in hand to buy a good broom, and energy enough to annex a vacant crossing."

Bret Harte never had occasion to feel this, but the old fear that his pen might either fail him, or not earn a sufficiency for his household, lay heavily upon him. Once more he sought additional employment, and, though he had no desire to leave America, when the Consulate of Crefeld in Prussia was offered to him he accepted it. And so it came about that (in 1878), having established his wife and family at Sea Cliff, he quitted his native land, little thinking he was never to see it again.

CHAPTER V

FROM THE NEW WORLD TO THE OLD

ALTHOUGH, as we have seen, the *Daily News* feared that not a few of the most intelligent English readers would be found asking, "Who is Mr. Bret Harte? and what has he said or done?" he had had his enthusiastic admirers on this side of the Atlantic ever since the first appearance of *The Overland Monthly*, and when, on his way to Crefeld, he first landed on British soil, he must have known he would have a hearty reception.

Thomas Hood the younger, or Tom Hood, as he was generally called, was among the first, if not the very first Englishman to discover and delight in the crack of the new American whip.

To the first volume of his stories published in England, Hood wrote an introduction, and in it he said: "Early in the January of 1869 I received a batch of new magazines, which on inspection proved to be the first five numbers of *The Overland Monthly*, which had been started at San Francisco in the July preceding. I had for some time been acquainted with that clever and most audacious print, *The San Francisco Newsletter*, and was therefore prepared to find merits in the new periodical. Nevertheless to eyes accustomed to the gorgeous covers and superfine getting up of our English magazines, the appearance of the newcomer was not attractive. It was printed on paper seemingly related to that species in which Beauty puts away her ringlets for the night, and its brown wrapper was of texture and tint suggestive of parcels of grocery. But if the exterior was unpretentious, the contents were attractive enough. The magazine had as it were a fragrance of its own, like 'a spray of Western pine.' The articles were fresh and original, the subjects they treated of were novel and interesting. I believe I read every page of those five numbers, and I looked forward anxiously for the arrival of the sixth. One feature in the magazine I commend to the consideration of editors generally. Each monthly number had its table of contents, wherein the articles were anonymous; but in the index in the sixth, and last in each volume, the names of the authors were given. It gave a peculiar relish to one's reading, after one became acquainted with the various styles of the writers, to guess the authors, and compare conjectures with the index.

"The editor's name did not appear, but in a gossip entitled 'Etc.' at the end of each number, he from time to time inserted little bits of verse that had a local flavour that was very agreeable. The second number contained 'The Luck of Roaring Camp.' The critiques on new books here and there betrayed his hand. The 'Etc.' in number five opened with a quaint mention of 'an earth-wave, which, passing under San Francisco, had left its record upon some sheets of the number, by the falling of the roof of the building in which they were stored,' and asking readers, it having been too late to reprint, to pardon 'any blemishes on those signatures to which the great earthquake had added its mark.'

"The sixth number arrived, and turning to the index, I found the authors' names were given there, and that the writer of the articles which had interested me most was 'F. B. Harte.' With the first number of the second volume, 'The Holiday Number,' he resumed the 'Roaring Camp' vein, in 'The Outcasts of Poker Flat.'

"From that time he became a writer to be looked for, and he never disappointed me. In prose or verse he was sure to be good, whether he was humorous or pathetic. In volume iii. the index made a further revelation of his name as 'Fr. Bret Harte.'"

To his discoveries in the "gossip entitled 'Etc.,'" I think Tom Hood might have safely added the following:—

"'There are,' says a pleasant authority in a late number of the *Overland*, 'more than 5000 Springs in the Coast Range.' How many there are in other parts of California we cannot estimate, for our spas have yet to be written up. Oral tradition gives a glowing but vague account of their peculiar and wonderful virtues. We all know some man who knew another man who, after having been given over by the faculty, was cured by two baths in the Scalding Spring, the Lukewarm Spring, or the Spring of Abominable Odours. We all know the familiar Thompsonian Spring of San Andreas, where Nature offers boiling pennyroyal tea and boneset to the exhausted invalid, and the Compound Cathartic Spring, of San Antonio, whose waters, impregnated with magnesia, percolating a plantation of rhubarb, are so famous; but we want details. The following is a contribution towards making up those deficiencies:—

THE ARSENICAL SPRING OF SAN JOAQUIN.

Of all the fountains that poets sing—
Crystal, thermal, or mineral spring,
Ponce de León's Fount of Youth;
Wells—with bottoms of doubtful truth—
In short, of all the springs of Time
That were ever flowing in fact or rhyme,
That were ever tasted, felt or seen,
There were none like the Spring of San Joaquin.

Anno Domini Eighteen-seven,
Father Dominguez (now in Heaven—
Obiit, Eighteen twenty-seven)
Found the spring, and found it, too,
By his mule's miraculous cast of a shoe,
For his beast—a descendant of Balaam's ass—
Stopped on the instant, and would not pass.

The Padre thought the omen good,
And bent his lips to the trickling flood;
Then—as the chronicles declare,
On the honest faith of a true believer—
His cheeks, though wasted, lank and bare,
Filled like a withered russet-pear
In the vacuum *of* a glass receiver,

And the snows that seventy winters bring
Melted away in that magic spring.

Such, at least, was the wondrous news
The Padre brought into Santa Cruz.
The Church, of course, had its own views
Of who were worthiest to use
The magic spring; but the prior claim
Fell to the aged, sick, and lame.
Far and wide the people came:
Some from the healthful Aptos creek
Hastened to bring their helpless sick;
Even the fishers of rude Soquel
Suddenly found they were far from well;
The brawny dwellers of San Lorenzo
Said, in fact, they had never been so;
And all were ailing—strange to say—
From Pescadero to Monterey.

Over the mountain they poured in
With leathern bottles and bags of skin,
Through the cañons a motley throng
Trotted, hobbled, and limped along.
The fathers gazed at the moving scene
With pious joy and with souls serene,
And then—a result perhaps foreseen—
They laid out the Mission of San Joaquin.

Not in the eyes of Faith alone
The good effects of the waters shone;
But skins waxed rosy, eyes grew clear,
Of rough vacquero and muleteer.
Angular forms were rounded out,
Limbs grew supple and waists grew stout;
And as for the girls—for miles about
They had no equal! To this day,
From Pescadero to Monterey,
You'd still find eyes in which are seen
The liquid graces of San Joaquin.

There is a limit to human bliss,
And the Mission of San Joaquin had this:
None went abroad to roam or stay,
But they fell sick in the queerest way—
A singular sort of *malade du pays*
With gastric symptoms; so they spent
Their days in a sensuous content.
Caring little for things unseen
Beyond their bowers of living green—
Beyond the mountains that lay between
The world and the Mission of San Joaquin.

Winter passed, and the summer came;
The trunks of *madroñe*, all aflame,
Here and there through the underwood
Like pillars of fire starkly stood.
All of the breezy solitude
Was filled with the spicing of pine and bay
And resinous odours mixed and blended,
And dim and ghost-like far away
The smoke of the burning woods ascended.
Then of a sudden the mountains swam,
The rivers piled their floods in a dam;
The ridge above Los Gatos creek
Arched its spine in a feline fashion;
The forests waltzed till they grew sick,
And Nature shook in a speechless passion;
And, swallowed up in the earthquake's spleen,
The wonderful Spring of San Joaquin
Vanished, and never more was seen!

Two days passed; the Mission folk
In languid patience bore their yoke;
Some of them looked a trifle white,
But that, no doubt, was from earthquake fright.
Three days; there was sore distress,
Headache, nausea, giddiness.
Four days; faintings, tenderness
Of the mouth and fauces, and in less

Than one week—here the story closes—
We won't continue the prognosis—
Enough that now no trace is seen
Of the Spring or Mission of San Joaquin.

MORAL.

You see the point? Don't be too quick
To break bad habits—better stick,
Like the Mission folk, to your *arsenic!*"

This was surely Bret Harte's. The old experiences of the drug store run through it, and he was always interested in the effect of arsenic on the human system. I have already made mention of one of his latest stories ("Liberty Jones's Discovery") in which a plain girl becomes beautiful by unconsciously drinking of and bathing in the waters of an arsenical spring. There in a serious narrative he described the symptoms humorously alluded to in the foregoing stanzas.

Referring to his career before the appearance of this magazine, Hood says: "I do not think that as yet the public had discovered him; for Joaquin Miller, when in London, told me a volume of his poems, entitled 'The Lost Galleon,' published in 1867, had not met the success it deserved;" and adds, "I must, in concluding this Preface, acknowledge my indebtedness for the chief facts in it to my friend Mr. Justin McCarthy, who has on his recent return from America brought a few pleasant words from Bret Harte to me, in allusion to my having been one of the first to take note of his work in England, a fact due rather to my good luck in receiving early copies of the *Overland* than to any merit in recognising what any one who reads his contributions must have recognised—the undoubted genius of Bret Harte."

In the early days of the *Overland*, Tom Hood was the editor of *Fun*. He was an exceedingly popular man, and he loved to gather around him the best known and rising young writers of the day. These included T. W. Robertson (the dramatist), the brothers Brough, Clement Scott, H. J. Byron, W. S. Gilbert, Geoffrey Prowse, Edmund Yates, Sutherland Edwards, Godfrey Turner, and others whose names have since become household words. Those were the golden days of literary Bohemia, that pleasant land of whose Capital poor Prowse wrote—

> "The longitude's rather uncertain,
> The latitude's equally vague;
> But that person I pity who knows not the city,
> The beautiful city of Prague;"

and within the gates of that Capital the name of Bret Harte, thanks to Hood, soon became a familiar one. If he had only known it, the young American author had enlisted in London a strong and unique body of "Roaring Camp" and "Poker Flat" enthusiasts, and one and all longed to see him and thank him for the delight his work had given them.

I was too young to make one of that "goodly company," but thanks to the kindness of my dear old friend, E. A. Sothern (the comedian of Lord Dundreary fame), I made firm friendships with many of them, became infected with their ardour, and have ever remained one of the most loyal of Bret Harte's followers.

When I think of the hours and hours of keen pleasure his writings have given me, and the numbers of years over which that joy has continued, I feel I can never be too grateful to his memory. I have always felt with Tom Hood that he never disappointed me. In prose or verse he was sure to be good, whether he was humorous or pathetic. I know that some latter day critics have held that after the lapse of years his stories deteriorated in merit, but on that point I have something to say in another chapter.

In the pages of *Fun*, in the dying sixties and the dawning seventies, Hood was never tired of bringing the new author before the British public, and as the paper circulated widely and carried weight, gained for him an ever increasing number of readers. Poor Hood! How he would have rejoiced to listen, as I have often done, to Bret Harte's delighted and appreciative talk of his father's touching and sparkling poems. He knew many of them by heart, and as he sat by the fireside on a winter's night he loved to quote from them.

But even better than all this, Charles Dickens had found him out. His biographer, John Forster, records:—

"Not many months before my friend's death he had sent me two *Overland Monthlies*, containing two sketches by a young American writer far away in California, 'The Luck of Roaring Camp' and 'The Outcasts of Poker Flat,' in which he had found such subtle strokes of character as he had not anywhere else in late years discovered; the manner resembling himself, but the matter fresh to a degree that had surprised him; the painting in all respects masterly, and the wild rude thing painted a quite wonderful reality. I have rarely known him more honestly moved. A few months passed; telegraph wires flashed over the world that he had passed away on the 9th of June, and the young writer of whom he had then written to me, all unconscious of that praise, put his tribute of gratefulness and sorrow into the poem called 'Dickens in Camp.' It embodies the same kind of incident which had so affected the master himself in the papers to which I have referred; it shows the gentler influences which, in even those Californian wilds, can restore outlawed 'roaring campers' to silence and humanity; and there is hardly any form of posthumous tribute which I can imagine likely to have better satisfied his desire of fame than one which should thus connect with the special favourite among all his heroines, the restraints and authority exerted by his genius over the rudest and least civilised of competitors in that far, fierce race for wealth."

Most English readers are familiar with that beautiful poem which tells how a party of rough Californian miners, sitting by the blazing camp-fire at the foot of the snow-capped Sierras, with the moon slowly drifting above the pines, and to the accompaniment of the endless music of the swiftly-flowing river, were held enthralled while one of them, from a treasured copy of "The Old Curiosity Shop," read to them the touching narrative of the devoted Nell and her weak old grandfather's wanderings o'er English meadows. Thousands of English men and women were grateful to the American poet who thus paid his tender tribute to their loved author :—

. . . .

"The roaring camp-fire with rude humour painted
The ruddy tints of health
On haggard face and form that drooped and fainted
In the fierce race for wealth.

Till one arose and from his pack's scant treasure
A hoarded volume drew,
And cards were dropped from hands of listless leisure
To hear the tale anew.

. . . .

And so in mountain solitudes o'ertaken
As by some spell divine—
Their cares dropped from them like the needles shaken
From out the gusty pine.

Lost is that camp and wasted all its fire:
And he who wrought that spell?
Ah, towering pine and stately Kentish spire,
Ye have one tale to tell.

Lost is that camp, but let its fragrant story
Blend with the breath that thrills
With hop-vine's incense all the pensive glory
That fills the Kentish hills.

And on that grave where English oak and holly,
And laurel wreaths entwine,
Deem it not all a too presumptuous folly
This spray of Western pine!"

July 1870.

Bret Harte told me the little history of that ever-green poem, of how it was written on the day that the news of the death of Dickens reached him at San Rafael, California, while the last sheets of the July *Overland*, already edited by him, were going to press. After stifling the emotion that he felt (for he dearly loved his "Boz"), he hurriedly sent his first and only draft of the verses, which were destined to live so long, to the office at San Francisco. They were written in two or three hours, and at his urgent request the publication of the magazine was held back until they could appear.

When Mr. Frederic G. Kitton was preparing his sumptuous volume, "Charles Dickens by Pen and Pencil," he wrote to Bret Harte asking him if it would be possible for him to insert in it a facsimile of the poem as it was written. To this request he had reply:—

"*May 30th*, 1890.

"DEAR SIR,—I am very sorry that I have not the original MS. of 'Dickens in Camp.' I hurriedly sent the first and only draft of the verses to the office at San Francisco, and I suppose after passing the printer's and proof-reader's hands, it lapsed into the usual oblivion of all editorial 'copy.'

"I remember that it was very hastily but very honestly written, and it is fair to add it was not until later that I knew for the first time that those gentle and wonderful eyes, which I was thinking of as being closed for ever, had ever rested kindly upon a line of mine.—I am, Dear Sir, yours very sincerely,

Bret Harte."

With this letter he enclosed a copy of the poem in his own handwriting. Needless to say this was reproduced, and it exists in the beautiful monument Mr. Kitton has raised to the memory of the master he so well loves and so loyally serves.

Concerning his early manuscripts Bret Harte was careless. Unluckily he set no more store by them than the ordinary journalist does by his "copy" for the press. Absurd stories have been told about them. Some years ago it was currently reported that the original draft of "The Heathen Chinee" was safely lodged in the British Museum. He wanted to disprove this, and asked me to make inquiries about it. Taking some pains I did so, and found that the Museum authorities, while all admiring Ah Sin, Bill Nye, and Truthful James, knew nothing of the document of which I was in search.

Well, to return to my subject. On the day when, amidst "a rain of tears and flowers"—many flowers brought by unknown hands, many tears shed from unknown eyes—Charles Dickens was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, a letter in his handwriting (the magic handwriting that brought and still brings merriment and comfort to millions), addressed to Bret Harte, was on its way across the Atlantic. It was a letter in his usual hearty, breezy style, telling the young author how highly he thought of his work, asking him to contribute to *All the Year Round* (of which he was then editor), and bidding him, when he came to England, which he was "certain soon to do," to visit him at his delightful home at Gad's Hill—"a spot with which you are no doubt already familiar in connection with one William Shakespeare and a certain Sir John Falstaff."

Bret Harte's first visit to London was perforce a short one. There he found his old friend Joaquin Miller, who concerning it made this record:—

"He came to me in London late in the seventies, on his way to the Consulate at Crefeld, up the Rhine, a piteously small place for such a large man. He had a French dictionary in one pocket, he told me, half laughing, and a German dictionary in the other. London wanted to see him of course, and although 'the season' was over, all the literary men and women gathered about, and were simply charmed by his warm-hearted and perfect ways. 'George Eliot' asked after John Hay, and told Bret Harte that one of his poems was the finest thing in our language

"He could not rest until he stood by the grave of

XEROX

Xerox University Microfilms
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

WESTERN AMERICANA

Reproduced from the original in the collection of
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LIBRARIES

Dickens. But I drove him here and I drove him there to see the living. The dead would keep. But at last, one twilight, I led him by the hand to where some plain letters, in a broad, flat stone, just below the bust of Thackeray, read 'Charles Dickens.'

"Bret Harte is dead now, and it will not hurt him in politics, where they seem to want hard and heartless men for high places—not hurt him in politics or in anything anywhere—to tell the plain truth, how he tried to speak, but choked up, how tears ran down and fell on the stone as he bowed his bare head very low; how his hand trembled as I led him away."

Bret Harte was, indeed, a true believer in the genius of Charles Dickens. His knowledge of his books was unrivalled, and he could not only enjoy his humour, but appreciate to the utmost his pathos. He could have passed Charles Calverley's famous "Pickwick" Examination Paper with honours.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONSUL

WITH his own irresistible blend of mirth and sadness Bret Harte often spoke to me of the awful sense of loneliness that came over him when he found himself a solitary stranger in Crefeld. It was a keen sense of duty that had induced him to leave his family and friends in America; he had no doubt hated the idea of his self-imposed exile, and now that the test point had come he found it almost unendurable. In the evenings he would stroll listlessly around the unknown streets longing to see a face that would greet him with a smile, some familiar figure that would extend to him the hand of welcome; but he was a stranger among people speaking a strange language, and the sense of his isolation troubled him sorely. He became very sad when he recalled those early days at Crefeld, and when it was suggested that Mill had said, "Solitude, in the sense of being frequently alone, is necessary to the formation of any depth of character," he answered, "Yes, yes, that's true enough, but Mill didn't think of *my* solitude in that uncongenial German town."

The following letter to his wife tells of his endurances:—

THE CONSUL

"Mrs. **Bret Harte**,
Sea Cliff Hotel, Long Island.

"Crefeld, *July* 17, 1878.

"My dear Nan,—At last! I arrived here at eight o'clock this morning, after a long sleepless ride of twelve hours from Paris, and found your letter of June 28th awaiting me. It was only a day's later news, but it was the first news I had from home since I left three weeks ago.

"I left London Friday morning and reached Paris the same night, intending to come here the next day, but I found myself so worn out that I lingered at Paris until last night—three days. I saw Dora and Gertie. They were both glad to see me, were very kind, and found a nice little hotel for me, and helped me in many ways in my lingual helplessness, although I was dreadfully disappointed that they could not come to Crefeld with me, where so much depended upon my having some friend with me who understood the language. But I have audaciously travelled alone nearly four hundred miles, through an utterly foreign country, on one or two little French and German phrases, and a very small stock of assurance, and have delivered my letters to my predecessor, and shall take possession of the Consulate to-morrow. Mr. ——, the present incumbent, appears to me—I do not know how far I shall modify my impression hereafter—as a very narrow, mean, ill-bred, and not over-bright Puritanical German. It was my intention to appoint him my Vice-Consul—an act of courtesy suggested both by my own sense of right and Mr. Lenard's advice, but he does not seem to deserve it, and has even received my suggestion of it with the suspicion of a mean nature. But at present I fear I may have to do it, for I know no one else here—I am to all appearance utterly friendless; I have not received the first act of kindness or courtesy from any one, and I suppose this man sees it. I shall go to Bavaria to-morrow to see the Consul there, who held this place as one of his dependencies, and under whose directions —— was, and try to make matters straight.

"It's been up-hill work ever since I left New York, but I shall try to see it through, please God! I don't allow myself to think over it at all, or I should go crazy. I shut my eyes to it, and in doing so perhaps I shut out what is often so pleasant to a traveller's first impressions, but thus far London has only seemed to me a sluggish nightmare through which I have waked, and Paris a confused sort of hysterical experience. I had hoped for a little kindness and rest here. Perhaps it may come. To-day I found here (forwarded from London) a kind little response to my card from Froude, who invites me to come to his country place—an old seaport village in Devonshire. If everything had gone well here—if I can make it go well here—I shall go back to London and Paris for a vacation of a few weeks, and see Froude at least.

"At least, Nan, be sure I've written now the worst; I think things must be better soon. I shall, please God, make some friends in good time, and will try and be patient. But I shall not think of sending for you until I see clearly that I can stay myself. If the worst comes to the worst I shall try to stand it for a year, and save enough to come home and begin anew there. But I could not stand it to see you break your heart here through disappointment, as I mayhap may do.

"I shall write again in a day or two when I have taken my place.—Your affectionate

FRANK.

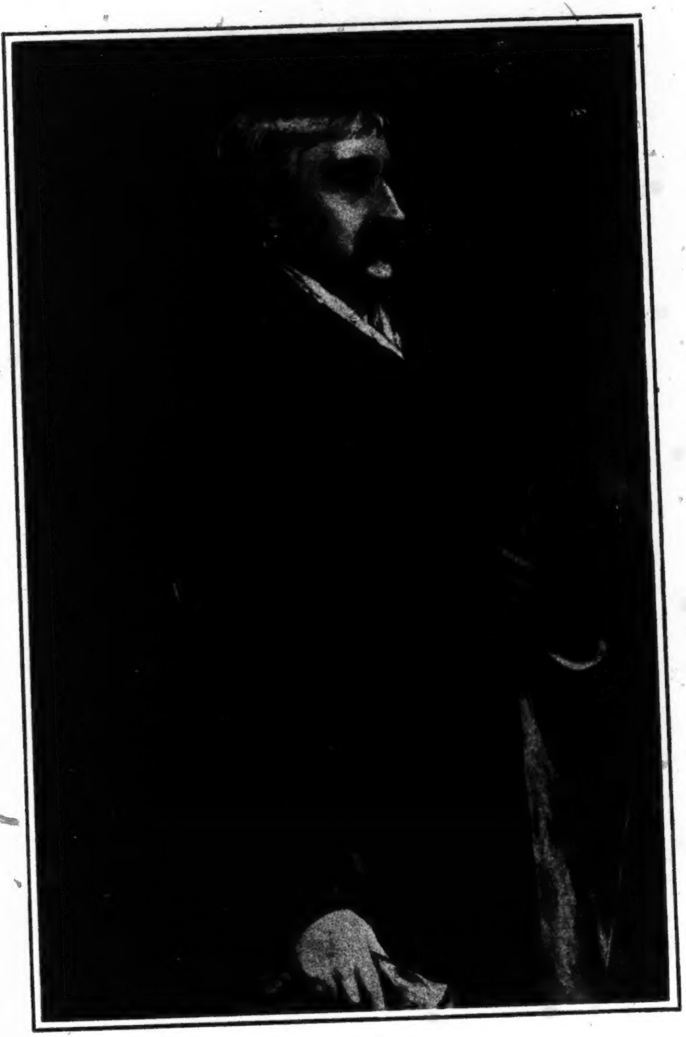
"P.S.—My health is pretty fair. It would be unfair to judge of it now until I get over my ennui."

It is characteristic of Bret Harte that when within a few hours he saw a glimpse of blue in his cloudy sky, he did not wait for a "day or two," but hastened to send home more cheering news.

"MRS. BRET HARTE,
Sea Cliff Hotel, Sea Cliff, Long Island.

"CREFELD, *July* 17, 1878, *Midnight.*

"MY DEAR NAN,—I wrote and mailed you a letter this afternoon that I fear was rather disconsolate, so I sit down to-night to send another, which I hope will take a little of the blues out of the first. Since I wrote I have had some further conversation with my predecessor, Mr. ——, and I think I can manage



Bret Harte. From the original painting by John Pettie, R.A.

[*To face p.* 170.

matters with him. He has hauled in his horns considerably since I told him that the position I offered him—as far as the honour of it went—was better than the one he held. For the one thing pleasant about my office is that the dignity of it has been raised on my account. It was only a dependence—a Consular agency—before it was offered to me.

"I feel a little more hopeful, too, for I have been taken out to a 'fest'—or a festival—of one of the viners, and one or two of the people were a little kind. I forced myself to go; those German festivals are distasteful to me, and I did not care to show my ignorance of their language quite so prominently, but I thought it was the proper thing for me to do. It was a very queer sight. About five hundred people were in an artificial garden beside an artificial lake, looking at artificial fireworks, and yet as thoroughly enjoying it as if they were children. Of course there was beer and wine. Here as in Paris everybody drinks, and all the time, and nobody gets drunk. Beer, beer, beer; and meals, meals, meals; food and drink, and drink and food again. Everywhere the body is worshipped. Beside them we are but unsubstantial spirits.

"I write this in my hotel, having had to pass through a mysterious gate and so into a side courtyard and up a pair of labyrinthine stairs, to my dim 'zimmer' or chamber. The whole scene as I returned to-night looked as it does on the stage, the lantern over the iron gate, the inn strutting out into the street with a sidewalk not a foot wide. I know now from my observations both here and in Paris and London where the scene-painters at the theatres get their subjects. Those impossible houses—those unreal silent streets all exist in Europe.

"Good-night. I go to Bavaria to-morrow.

FRANK.

"I send Frankie a little book of songs which were sung by the people at the 'fest.' Tell him to look at page 13, and try to get it translated and imagine how his papa felt when he heard those grown men sing it. I think *you* will recognise it at once."

In the course of one of his solitary rambles in the Crefeld streets, he found himself listlessly gazing at a bookseller's window, and there in the displayed volumes he saw the name of

BRET HARTE.

In a moment his feelings changed. If *he* was so far a stranger in the land, his works had preceded him! That was *something!* Alone, and in a foreign town, he was face to face with his own name, and knew that it was honoured. This episode acted as a glorious tonic. He bought a copy of one of the books containing his translated work and sent it to his young son. Here is a letter to him:—

"Mr. Francis King Harte,
Sea Cliff Hotel,
Sea Cliff, Long Island,
New York.

"Crefeld, *July* 25, 1878.

"My dear Frankie,—I was very glad to get your letter, although the Private Secretary required spanking for writing so badly. The letter was good enough for a bad boy like you, but wouldn't do for a Private Secretary just yet. And in this country of wonderful schools there are little boys that I have met who speak two or three languages and write even their own difficult one elegantly. Of course to do this they have to go to school at 7 o'clock in the morning, and do not come home until 5 P.M. It will please you to know that if you go to school here, you are entitled to a different coloured gold-lace cap, for your different classes as you are promoted. The boys wear them here and are very proud of their rank. It is really a very pretty sight to see them trooping by, with their books in a neat knapsack on their backs. It is not to me so pretty a sight, however, to see a tall soldier dragging a boy to school, who is dilatory or a truant, for here education is *compulsory*. It is an offence not to go to school—if you are well.

"I cannot send you a photograph of 'our

Palace,' but I think I will presently have a picture taken of the Consulate and the two very pretty rooms that I have hired for the office. I lived for some days at the 'Hotel Wildenmann,' *i.e.* 'Wildman,' a very old and very uncomfortable building. But a day or two ago one of the wealthiest men in this place asked me to come and stay for a few days at his house—a very beautiful place with a large garden. His family are away, and we live together in this great house like Princes, only that German Princes have meals six times a day and drink a great deal of wine. Everybody in Germany of wealth lives in the open air in summer as much as he can, so that we breakfast in one summer-house, and have dinner in another, and supper in another, served by people in livery, so that it is a gorgeous picnic all the time, and not like home one bit.

"We drove out the other day through a lovely road bordered with fine poplar trees, and more like a garden walk than a country road, to the Rhine, which is but two miles and a half from this place. The road had been built by Napoleon the First when he was victorious everywhere, and went straight on through everybody's property, and even over their dead bones. Suddenly to the right we saw the ruins of an old castle, vine clad, and crumbling, exactly like a scene on the stage. It was all very wonderful.

"But papa thought, after all, that he was glad his boys lived in a country that was as yet quite *pure* and *sweet* and *good*, and where every field did not seem to cry out with the remembrance of bloodshed and wrong, and where so many people had lived and suffered, that to-night, under this clear moon, their very ghosts seemed to throng the road and dispute our right of way. Be thankful, my dear boy, that you are an American. Papa was never so fond of his country before as in this land that has been so great, so powerful, and so very, very hard and wicked. America is the country of glowing youth and unwritten history, and it rests with such as you to make it great.

"There is a moral somewhere in this, which I dare say mamma will find for you, if she and you together can read this scrawl.—Your affectionate papa, father of Private Secretary,

Frankie Harte."

The good people who, while professing to admire the writings of Bret Harte, never tire of saying that he produced nothing but stories about California and its gold-seekers, could, if they only took the trouble to do so, easily learn from his published works how completely he interested himself in his environment wherever it might be, and how his experience as Consul, whether in Crefeld or Glasgow, illumined some of his choicest work.

Though he was never particularly happy in Germany he took careful observations of his surroundings, and as his subsequent records, worked into fiction form, are really autobiographical notes, I feel I must, if only to convince the good people to whom I have referred, allude to them here.

Take, for example, his whimsically conceived and perfectly concluded little romance, "Unser Karl," in which he said:—

"The American Consul for Schlachtstadt had just turned out of the broad König's Allée into the little square that held his consulate. Its residences also seemed to him to wear that singularly uninhabited air peculiar to a street scene in a theatre. The façades, with their stiff, striped wooden awnings over the windows, were of the regularity colour and pattern only seen on the stage, and conversation carried on in the street below always seemed to be invested with that perfect confidence and security which surrounds the actor in his painted desert of urban perspective. Yet it was a peaceful change to the other byways and highways of Schlachtstadt—which were always filled with an equally unreal and mechanical soldiery, who appeared to be daily taken out of their boxes of 'caserne' or depot and loosely scattered all over the pretty linden-haunted German town. There were soldiers standing on street corners, soldiers staring woodenly into shop windows, soldiers halted suddenly into stone, like lizards, at the approach of *offiziere*—*offiziere* lounging stiffly, four abreast, sweeping the pavement with their trailing sabres all at one angle. There were cavalcades of red hussars, cavalcades of blue hussars, cavalcades of Uhlans, with glittering lances and pennons, with or without a band, formally parading; there were straggling 'fatigues' or 'details' coming round the corners; there were dusty, businesslike columns of infantry, going nowhere and to no purpose. And they one and all seemed to be *wound up*, for that service, and apparently always in the same place. In the band of their caps—invariably of one pattern—was a button, in the centre of which was a square opening or keyhole. The Consul was always convinced that through this keyhole opening, by means of a key, the humblest *caporal* wound up his file, the Hauptmann controlled his lieutenants and non-commissioned officers, and even the General himself, wearing the same cap, was subject (through his cap) to a higher moving power. In the suburbs, when the supply of soldiers gave out, there were sentry-boxes; when these dropped off there were 'caissons' or commissary waggons. And lest the military idea should ever fail from out the Schlachtstadt burgher's mind, there were police in uniform, street-sweepers in uniform, the ticket-takers, guards, and sweepers at the *Bahnhof* were in uniform, but all wearing the same kind of cap, with the probability of having been wound up freshly each morning for their daily work. Even the postman delivered peaceful invoices to the Consul with his side-arms and the air of bringing despatches from the field of battle, and the Consul saluted, and felt for a few moments the whole weight of his consular responsibility.

"Yet, in spite of this military precedence, it did not seem in the least inconsistent with the decidedly peaceful character of the town, and this again suggested its utter unreality; wandering cows sometimes got mixed up with squadrons of cavalry, and didn't seem to mind it; sheep passed singly between files of infantry, or preceded them in a flock when on the march; indeed, nothing could be more delightful and innocent than to see a regiment of infantry in heavy marching order, laden with every conceivable thing they could want for a week, returning after a cheerful search for an invisible enemy in the suburbs, to bivouac peacefully among the cabbages in the market-place. Nobody was ever imposed upon for a moment by their tremendous energy and severe display; drums might beat, trumpets blow, dragoons charge furiously all over the Exercier-Platz; or suddenly flash their naked swords in the streets to the guttural command of an officer—nobody seemed to mind it. People glanced up to recognise Rudolph or Max 'doing their service,' nodded, and went about their business. And although the officers always wore their side-arms, and at the most peaceful of social dinners only relinquished their swords in the hall, apparently that they might be able to buckle them on again and rush out to do battle for the Fatherland between the courses, the other guests only looked upon these weapons in the light of sticks and umbrellas, and possessed their souls in peace. And when, added to this singular incongruity, many of these warriors were spectacled, studious men, and, despite their lethal weapons, wore a slightly professional air, and were—to a man—deeply sentimental and singularly simple, their attitude in this eternal *Kriegspiel* seemed to the Consul more puzzling than ever.

"As he entered his consulate he was confronted with another aspect of Schlachtstadt quite as wonderful, yet already familiar to him. For in spite of these 'alarums without,' which, however, never seem to penetrate beyond the town itself, Schlachtstadt and its suburbs were known all over the world for the manufactures of certain beautiful textile fabrics, and many of the rank and file of these warriors had built up the fame and prosperity of the district over their peaceful looms in wayside cottages. There were great depots and counting-houses, larger than even the cavalry barracks, where no other uniform but that of the postman was known. Hence it was that the Consul's chief duty was to uphold the flag of his own country by the examination and certification of divers invoices sent to his office by the manufacturers. But, oddly enough, these business messengers were chiefly women—not clerks, but ordinary household servants, and, on busy days, the consulate might have been mistaken for a female registry office, so filled and possessed it was by waiting Mädchen. Here it was that Gretchen, Lieschen, and Clärchen, in the cleanest of blue gowns, and stoutly but smartly shod, brought their invoices in a piece of clean paper, or folded in a blue handkerchief, and laid them, with fingers more or less worn and stubby from hard service, before the Consul for his signature. Once, in the case of a very young Mädchen, that signature was blotted by the sweep of a flaxen braid upon it as the child turned to go, but generally there was a grave, serious business instinct and sense of responsibility in these girls of ordinary peasant origin which, equally with their sisters of France, were unknown to the English or American woman of any class."

The humour of his military picture will be appreciated by all who know Germany; its *pendant* is no doubt lifelike, but it seems rather sad to think of the author of "The Luck of Roaring Camp" and "The Heathen Chinee" doomed to examine and sign invoices!

But the following letter will show that he was very soon able to put things in order at Crefeld, and take his much desired vacation.

"Mrs. Bret Harte, Sea Cliff Hotel,
Sea Cliff, Long Island.

"'The Molt,' Salcombe, Kingsbridge,
"Devonshire, *Aug.* 19, 1878.

"My dear Anna,—I have just received yours of August 2nd, forwarded to me from Crefeld. I can understand your alarm at not receiving a letter from me for two weeks, because after writing you on the 18th July I did not write again until I had arrived at Crefeld, nearly two weeks. I think I have received all your letters; I think you have all mine.

"I wrote you from London a day or two ago. Since then I came down here to visit Froude (the historian), who has treated me with very particular kindness. After I left London, a month ago, I got a line from Houghton at Crefeld inviting me to dinner the next day; but since then I have not heard from him. I sent my card to Froude when I first arrived. He quickly responded with an invitation, but I could not then leave Crefeld; then he sent a second letter, which I enclose, and so I came down here. This damp English climate is depressing to me, and of course this place on the south-westerly coast of England is almost like being again at sea; but I don't regret coming here.

"It is, without exception, one of the most *perfect* country houses I ever beheld. Imagine, if you can, something between 'Locksley Hall' and the 'High Hall Garden,' where Maud used to walk, and you have some idea of this graceful English home. I look from my windows down upon exquisite lawns and terraces all sloping towards the sea wall and then down upon the blue sea below. I walk out in the long high garden, past walls hanging with netted peaches and apricots, past terraces looking over the ruins of an old feudal castle, and I can scarcely believe I am not reading an English novel or that I am not myself a wandering ghost. To heighten the absurdity when I return to my room

I am confronted by the inscription on the door, 'Lord Devon' (for this is the property of the Earl of Devon, and I occupy his favourite room), and I seem to have died and to be resting under a gilded mausoleum that lies even more than the average tombstone does. Froude is a connection of the Earl's, and has hired the house for the summer.

"He is a widower, with two daughters and a son. The eldest girl is not unlike a highly educated Boston girl, and the conversation sometimes reminds me of Boston. The youngest daughter, only ten years old, told her sister in reference to some conversation Froude and I had that '*she feared*' (this child) 'that Mr. Bret Harte was inclined to be *sceptical*"! Doesn't this exceed any English story of the precocity of American children? The boy, scarcely fourteen, acts like a boy of eight (an American boy of eight) and talks like a man of thirty, as far as pure English and facility of expression goes. His manners are perfect, yet he is perfectly simple and boylike. The culture and breeding of some English children is really marvellous. But somehow—and here comes one of my 'buts'—there's always a suggestion of some repression, some discipline that I don't like. Everybody is carefully trained to their station, and seldom bursts out beyond it. The respect always shown towards me is something fine—and depressing. I can easily feel how this deference to superiors is ingrained in all.

"But Froude—dear old noble fellow—is splendid.

I love him more than I ever did in America. He is great, broad, manly—democratic in the best sense of the word, scorning all sycophancy and meanness, accepting all that is around him, yet more proud of his literary profession than of his kinship with these people whom he quietly controls. There are only a few literary men like him here, but they are kings. I could not have had a better introduction to them than through Froude, who knows them all, who is Tennyson's best friend, and who is anxious to make my *entrée* among them a success. I had forgotten that Canon Kingsley, whom you liked so much, is Froude's brother-in-law, until Froude reminded me of it. So it is like being among friends here.

"So far I've avoided seeing any company here; but Froude and I walk and walk, and talk and talk. They let me do as I want, and I have not been well enough yet to do aught but lounge. The doctor is coming to see me to-day, and if I am no better I shall return in a day or two to London and then to Crefeld.

"I'll write you from London. God bless you all.—Your affectionate FRANK."

First and foremost among the men whom Bret Harte desired to see when he came to England was J. A. Froude. For his works he had the highest admiration, with his views he entertained the deepest sympathy, and his aims appealed to him in no ordinary degree. This memorable visit to Devonshire came just at the right time; it took Bret Harte away from the tedium of his Crefeld invoice duties and the unsuitability of his military surroundings. Henceforth a friendship strong and great grew between the two men, and lasted as long as life permits such precious things to exist. I have never heard one man speak with more affection and appreciation of another than Bret Harte when he spoke of J. A. Froude. It was, too, a topic to which he always loved to return.

He lingered for awhile in England, and the accompanying two letters to his wife show that while he was making new and influential friends he was always thinking of his American home.

"Mrs. Bret Harte, Sea Cliff Hotel,
Sea Cliff, Long Island.

"London, *August* 27, 1878.

"My dear Nan,—I hope Mr. Osgood will find time to see you, but if he does not I send by him to the boys some little things of no particular value, other than to have them know that papa had put these things aside for his boys. The large medal is really fine, and was presented to me by one of the directors of the Company. It is of bronze, and is valuable as having a perfect likeness of the Emperor and Empress. The sleeve buttons are something new (I bought them in the Palais Royal)—being an exact photograph of a French newspaper and a German bank-note.

"I dare not go with Osgood to Liverpool for fear I shall get on the steamer with him and return. So I try to forget that I have no home to go to, and must stay here, day by day.—God bless you all.

FRANK."

There is something very pathetic in the picture of the man whose thoughts turned to the west, but whose duties pointed to the east. But, as we shall presently see, he was busy in London making hopeful arrangements for the future. The Ethel and Jessamy referred to in the next letter were his daughters.

"MRS. BRET HARTE, 45 Fifth Avenue,
New York City.

"LONDON, *November* 6, 1878.

"MY DEAR NAN,—I enclose a picture for Ethel and have written a note to her, which of course you will read and translate. The picture is a photo of His Grace the Duke of St. Albans' second son—the Marquis of something or other, I've forgotten the title. But the Duchess gave it to me for Ethel, and wrote his name on the back.

"It's a pretty picture of a little fellow 'born to the purple,' but too young yet to be spoiled by the knowledge of it.

"I am now on my way to Crefeld. I shall write you as soon as I arrive.

"I have just remembered something which of course you have already seen. And so I write to the Duchess to-day that I must have another picture for *Jessamy*.—God bless you all. **Frank.**"

The next letter (written from Crefeld) humorously shows Bret Harte's opinion of himself as a musical critic. He really loved music, but he had the sincerest contempt for those amateurs who, knowing as little of the art as himself (he was avowedly no musician), would go into affected raptures over works that they could not possibly understand. In writing to his wife he knew that he was expressing his views and tastes to a well-skilled connoisseur.

"Mrs. Bret Harte, care of Mrs. Knanfft,
45 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

"Crefeld, *January* 22, 1879.

"My dear Anna,—Mrs. Bayard Taylor has sent me a book of her late husband's, and a very kind note, and it occurs to me to enclose to you to-day the letter I received from her in answer to one I wrote her after hearing of her husband's death. You remember that I did not feel very kindly towards him, nor had he troubled himself much about me when I came here alone and friendless, but his death choked back my resentment, and what I wrote to her and afterwards in the *Tageblatt*, I felt very honestly.

"I have been several times to the opera at Dusseldorf, and I have been hesitating whether I should slowly prepare you for a great shock or tell you at once that *musical Germany* is a humbug. It had struck me during the last two months that I had really heard nothing good in the way of music or even *as good* as I have heard in America, and it was only a week ago that hearing a piano played in an adjoining house, and played badly at that, I was suddenly struck with the fact that it was really the first piano that I had heard in Germany. I have heard orchestras at concerts and military bands; but no better than in America. My first operatic experience was *Tannhäuser*. I can see your superior smile, Anna, at this; and I know how you will take my criticism of Wagner, so I don't mind saying plainly, that it was the most diabolically hideous and stupidly monotonous performance I ever heard. I shall say nothing about the orchestral harmonies, for there wasn't anything going on of that kind, unless you call something that seemed like a boiler factory at work in the next street, and the wind whistling through the rigging of a channel steamer, harmony. But I *must say one thing!* In the third act, I think, Tannhäuser and two other minstrels sing before the King and Court to the accompaniment of their harps—and the boiler factory. Each minstrel sang or rather declaimed something like the multiplication table for about twenty minutes. Tannhäuser, when his turn came, declaimed longer, and more lugubriously, and ponderously and monotonously than the others, and went into 'nine times nine are eighty-one' and 'ten times ten are twenty,' when suddenly when he had finished they all drew their swords and rushed at him. I turned to General Von Rauch and said to him that I didn't wonder at it. 'Ah,' said he, 'you know the story then?' 'No, not exactly,' I replied. 'Ja wohl,' said Von Rauch, 'the story is that these minstrels are all singing in praise of Love, but they are furious at Tannhäuser who loves Hilda, the German Venus, for singing in the praise of Love so *wildly*, so *warmly*, so *passionately!*' Then I concluded that I really did not understand Wagner.

"But what I wanted to say was that even my poor uneducated ear detected bad instrumentation and worse singing in the choruses. I confided this much to a friend, and he said very frankly that I was probably right, that the best musicians and choruses went to America!

"Then I was awfully disappointed in 'Faust,' or, as it is known here in the playbills, 'Marguerite.' You know how I love that delicious idyl of Gounod's, and I was in my seat that night long before the curtain went up. Before the first act was over I felt like leaving, and yet I was glad I stayed. For although the chorus of villagers was frightful, and Faust and Mephistopheles spouted and declaimed blank verse at each other—whole pages of Goethe, yet the acting was good. The music was a little better in the next act, and the acting was superb. I have never seen such a Marguerite! From the time she first meets Faust with that pert rebuke until the final scenes she was perfect. The prayer in the church—the church interior represented with kneeling figures and service going on—such as they dare not represent in England—was most wonderful. I can see her yet, passing from one to another of the kneeling groups as the women draw away from her, and as she knelt in a blind groping way with her fingers mechanically turning the leaves of her prayer-book, and the voice of Mephistopheles mingling with the music, until, with one wild shriek she threw the book away. Then it was that I jumped up in my seat and applauded. But think of my coming to Germany to hear opera badly sung, and magnificently acted!

"I saw *Der Freischütz* after this, but it was not so well acted, and awfully sung. Yet the scenery was wonderfully good and the costumes historically perfect. The audiences from Cologne to Düsseldorf are all the same, stiff, formal, plainly dressed, all except the officers. The opera audience at Cologne look like an American prayer-meeting.

"I have written Frankie and Wodie. Unless my lecture tour is postponed, I shall not write you again until I get to London. And then I shall be so busy I can only give you the news of success.—God bless you all.

FRANK."

"Wodie" was his eldest son. He bore his mother's family name, Griswold.

The lecture tour to which he refers had been arranged while he was in London, and that he had been working hard in other ways is proved by the introduction to a volume of his stories and verses now published in England by Messrs. Chatto and Windus. It ran:—"In offering this collection of sketches to the English public, the author is conscious of attaching an importance to them that may not be shared by the general reader, but which he, as an American writer on English soil, cannot fail to feel very sensibly. The collection is made by himself, the letterpress revised by his own hand, and he feels for the first time that these fugitive children of his brain are no longer friendless in a strange land, entrusted to the care of a foster-mother, however discreet, but are his own creations, for whose presentation to the public in this fashion he is alone responsible. Three or four having been born upon English soil may claim the rights of citizenship, but the others he must leave to prove their identity with English literature on their own merits."

Almost simultaneously with this publication came his first appearance in England as a lecturer. Of his reception by public and critics he had no cause to complain. Whether the Crystal Palace was or was not a suitable place for his experiment is not for me to say, but of its result the always downright *Athenæum* said:—

"There come down upon us periodically, predicted by 'cablegrams' from the other side of the Atlantic, depressing storms. By way of recompense there comes also thence from time to time an exhilarating humourist. Such a visitor is now among us. But it is not only his fund of humour, genuine, original and abundant as that is, which in the case of Mr. Bret Harte justly claims admiration. All who heard the lecture which he delivered at the Crystal Palace on 'The Argonauts of '49,' the Californian Crusaders, must have learnt then, if his writings had not previously made them aware of the fact, that he is a true artist, possessing rare mastery over language, skilled to express ideas, pathetic or grotesque. With the lecture itself we will not at present deal, beyond stating that it served to bring more clearly before the eyes of those who were present that far Western region about which Mr. Bret Harte has written so much that is familiar to every reader, and especially to place in clear relief the striking contrast between the idyllic calm of old California and the rush and whirl of its modern life.

"It is to be hoped that his consular duties at Crefeld will not prove so engrossing as to prevent him from continuing to write, and also from enabling English audiences to become personally acquainted with a speaker and writer who is one of the best representatives of American humour — that humour so equally delightful in its exaggerations, as when the floor is represented as being 'strewed like the leaves on the strand' with the cards which 'that heathen Chinee' had concealed in his sleeves, and in its euphemistic understatements, as when the fatal effect of the 'chunk of old red sandstone' on Abner Dean of Angel's is merely hinted at in the information that 'the subsequent proceedings interested him no more.'

"Mr. Harte's lecture on California, its early inhabitants and its later colonizers, will doubtless be repeated in localities more easy of access than Sydenham, and in that case many an audience will be able to enjoy the charm which attends on choice language excellently spoken, describing the picturesqueness of quite unfamiliar scenes, telling of strange and unromantic forms of life, and appealing in swift succession to the hearer's poetic imagination and to his sense of humour. How wide is now the audience to which his literary work appeals may be judged by the fact that there now lies before us a Servian translation of six of his tales, printed last year at Temesvar, under the title of *Shest Kaliforniiskikh Pricha Breta Kharta*, and preceded by an enthusiastic preface in German by the translator, Ivan B. Popovitch."

Reaching New York this notice was received with great satisfaction by Bret Harte's friends and countrymen, and under the headline,

ANOTHER AMERICAN SUCCESS IN ENGLAND,

was freely circulated in the newspapers throughout the States.

The lecture delighted every one who heard it. The handsome face and dignified presence of the popular author at once arrested attention, and he held his audiences enthralled as in his clear, striking, and beautifully modulated voice he told us the story of the Argonauts of '49, of an episode of American life as quaint and typical as that of the Greek adventurers whose name gave the idea he had borrowed for his title—a kind of crusade without a cross, an exodus without a prophet. "It is not," he said, "a pretty story. I do not know that it is even instructive. It is of a life of which perhaps the best that can be said is that it exists no longer."

Be that as it may, he made it a very absorbing story, and he struck the right keynote by giving in the masterly fashion of one who is familiar with his subject, an idea of the country which the Argonauts recreated, and the civilisation they displaced. For more than three hundred years California was of all Christian countries the least known. The glow and glamour of Spanish tradition and discovery were about it. There was an old English map in which it was set down as an *island!* There was the Rio de los Reyes—a kind of gorgeous Mississippi, leading directly to the heart of the continent which De Fonte claimed to have discovered. There was the Anian passage, a prophetic forecast of the Pacific Railroad, through which Moldonado declared that he had sailed to the North Atlantic. Another Spanish discoverer brought his "mendacious personality" directly from the Pacific by way of Columbia River to Lake Ontario on which (Bret Harte was rejoiced to say) he found a Yankee vessel from Boston, whose captain informed him that he had come up from the Atlantic only a few days before. Along the line of iron-bound coast the old freebooters chased the timid Philippine galleons, and in its largest bay, beside the present gateway of the East, Sir Francis Drake lay for two weeks and scraped the barnacles from his adventurous keels. It was only within quite recent years that a company of gold diggers, turning up the ocean sands, had come across some large cakes of wax imbedded in the broken and fire-scarred ribs of a wreck of ancient date. The Californian heart was at once fired at the discovery, and in a few weeks a hundred men or more were digging, burrowing, and scraping for the lost treasure of the Philippine galleon. At last they found a few cutlasses with the Queen's broad-arrow on their blades! The enterprising, gallant, and slightly piratical Sir Francis Drake had been there before them.

Yet they were peaceful pastoral days for California. Through the great Central Valley the Sacramento poured an unstained current into a majestic bay, ruffled by no keels and fretted by no wharves. The Angelus bell rung at San Bernardino, and taken up by every Mission tower along the darkening coast, rang the good people to prayer and sleep before nine o'clock every night. Leagues of wild oats, progenitors of those great wheat fields that now drug the markets, hung their idle heads on the hillsides—vast herds of untamed cattle, whose hides and horns made the scant commerce of those days, wandered over the illimitable plains, knowing no human figure but that of the yearly riding vaquero on his unbroken mustang, which they regarded as one.

Around the white walls of the Mission buildings were clustered the huts of the Indian neophytes who dressed neatly but not expensively in mud. Presidios[1] garrisoned by a dozen raw militiamen kept the secular order, and in the scattered pueblos[2] rustic alcades[3] dispensed, like Sancho Panza, proverbial wisdom and practical equity to the bucolic litigant. The proprietors of the old ranchos[4] ruled in a patriarchal style, and lived to a patriarchal age. On a soil half-tropical in its character, in a climate wholly original in its practical conditions, a soft-handed Latin race slept and smoked the half-year's sunshine away, and believed they had discovered a new Spain. They awoke from their dream only to find themselves strangers on their own soil—foreigners in their own country—ignorant even of the treasure they had been sent to guard.

"Do Americans ever think," he asked, "that they owe their rights to California to the Catholic Church and the Mormon brotherhood? Yet Father Junipero Serra, ringing his bell in the heathen-wilderness of Upper California, and Brigham Young, leading his half-famished legions to Salt Lake, were the two great pioneers of the Argonauts of '49. All that western emigration that prior to the gold discovery penetrated the Oregon and Californian valleys and half Americanised the coast, would have perished by the way but for the providentially created oasis of Salt Lake City. The halting trains of alkali-poisoned oxen, the footsore and despairing teamsters gathered rest and succour from the Mormon settlement. The British frigate that sailed into the port of Monterey a day too late, saw the American flag that had crossed the continent flying from the cross of the Cathedral! A day sooner and an Englishman might have been telling you this story.

---

[1] Forts.

[2] Villages or townships.

[3] Justices of the Peace.

[4] Farms.

"Were our friends the Argonauts at all affected by these coincidences? I think not. They had that lordly contempt for a southern soft-tongued race which belonged to their Anglo-Saxon lineage. They were given to no superstitious romance, exalted by no special mission, inflamed by no high ambition, and sceptical of even the existence of the golden fleece until they saw it. Equal to their fate they accepted with a kind of heathen philosophy whatever it might bring. 'If there isn't any gold, what are you going to do with those sluice boxes?' said a newly arrived emigrant to a friend. 'They will make first-class coffins,' said his companion, with the simple directness of a man who has calculated his chances. If they did not burn their vessels behind them like Pizarro, they at least left the good ship *Argo* dismantled and rotting at the Colchian wharf. Sailors were shipped only for the outward voyage. Nobody expected to return, even those who anticipated failure. Fertile in expedient, they twisted their very failures into a certain sort of success. Until recently, there stood in San Francisco a house of the early days whose foundations were built entirely of plug tobacco in boxes. Their consignee had found a glut in the tobacco market, but lumber for foundations was at a tremendous premium!"

I must now set the lecture on one side and proceed with my narrative, but it contained one beautiful and thoughtful little picture that I would fain reproduce.

"Before taking leave of the Spanish-American," said Bret Harte, "let me recall a single figure. It is that of the earliest pioneer known to Californian history. He comes to us toiling over a Southern plain, an old man, weak, emaciated, friendless and alone. He has left his muleteers and acolytes a league behind him, and has wandered on without scrip or wallet, bearing only a crucifix and bell.

"It is a characteristic plain—one that your tourists do not penetrate—scorched yet bleak, windswept, blasted, baked to its very foundations, and cracked into gaping chasms. As the pitiless sun goes down, the old man staggers forward and falls utterly exhausted. He lies there all night. Towards morning he is found by some Indians—a feeble simple race—who in uncouth kindness offer him food and drink.

But before he accepts either he rises to his knees, and there says matins and baptizes them in the Catholic faith. And then it occurs to him to ask them where he is, and he finds that he has penetrated into the unknown land. It was Padre Junipero Serra, and the sun arose that morning on Christian California. Weighed by the usual estimate of success his mission was a failure. The heathen stole his provisions and massacred his acolytes. It is said that the good fathers themselves sometimes confounded baptism and bondage and laid the foundation of *peonage*,[1] but in the blood-stained and tear-blotted chronicle of the early California there is not a more heroic figure than this travel-worn, self-centered, self-denying Franciscan friar."

For the rest, the lecture consisted mainly of a brilliant series of anecdotes, mostly humorous, many pathetic, and all delightful, of the type so well known to the readers of his works. Quickly and in an appreciative way that proved infectious to his audiences, he ran through his gamut of miners, gamblers, San Franciscans, Spanish Dons, fascinating Señoras and Señoritas, pretty American girls, and bewildering Chinamen.

His infinitely diverting dealing with the latter ingenious folk brought his tale to an end, and in a beautiful peroration, which will never be forgotten by those who were fortunate enough to listen to the stirring eloquence with which it was delivered, he said:—

"And with this receding figure bringing up the rear of the procession I close my review of the Argonauts of '49. In the rank and file there may be many perhaps personally known to some of the audience. There may be gaps which the memories of others may supply. There are homes all over the world whose vacant places can never be filled. There are graves all over California on whose nameless mounds no one shall weep. I have told you that it is not a pretty story. I should like to end it with a flourish of trumpets, but the band has gone on before, and the dust of the highway is beginning to hide them from my view. They are marching to the city by the sea, the great loadstone hill that Sinbad saw, which they call Lone Mountain. There waiting at its base lies the *Argo*, and when the last Argonaut shall have passed in she will spread her white wings, and slip unnoticed through the Golden Gate that opens in the distance."

---

[1] *Peonage.* *Peon* signifies a servant, a labourer, a working man.

In face of the splendid impression made by Bret Harte at the Crystal Palace, and elsewhere, it is rather sad to think he was somewhat disappointed with the result of his first lecturing tour in England, but on his return to Crefeld he wrote disparagingly, if not despondently, of his venture :—

"Mrs. BRET HARTE, care of Mrs. Knanfft,
45 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

"CREFELD, *February* 21, 1879.

"MY DEAR NAN,—I have received two letters from you in the past two days, and one from Frankie and Wodie. Tell Wode I shall send his interesting account of the '50 schooner' to Mrs. Webb of Montreal, who has taken a great interest in him and his vessel. Tell Frankie I shall write a line or two to Boucicault for tickets for himself and Wodie—if it be not too late.

"You see I am back again at my post. The tour was a miserable failure financially—just as I feared. It has been now postponed for a month or six weeks—provided Mr. Carte, my agent, can send me a list of engagements (secured sums) sufficient to make it pay. I was in England three weeks and lectured five times, and cleared only about two hundred dollars above my expenses. I was bound in honour to perform them, or I should have returned when I found how I was deceived. Only a fear of repeating the 'Redpath' experience kept me from doing it.

"Of course I was, as far as the public and the press were concerned, very handsomely received. I had to decline many invitations, and it is proposed now, if I return, that I shall be offered a public dinner. But my return to England rests entirely on my being able to make the lecture tour profitable.—God bless you all. FRANK."

Yes, it was in England as in America. Even in the little world behind the scenes of the lecturer's desk and the inevitable and forbidding-looking water-bottle and tumbler, there are sometimes woes, worries, and disappointments. There may be a brave display of glitter, but it is not all gold. But Bret Harte was premature in talking of "miserable failure." He should have remembered that though his works had preceded him to England and rejoiced the hearts of all who had read them, he and his oratory had yet to be known. Moreover, there is something in the word "lecture" that scares certain people away from what (the precise name for it is lacking) is really a very pleasant form of entertainment—and these would have been the very people who should have filled Bret Harte's benches. But to thousands "lecture" spells "boredom," and such folk waited to be told of the good thing that was in store for them. As a matter of fact these earlier lectures were artistically successful, and, though financially disappointing, money had been gained rather than lost, and many a luckless aspirant to lecture-hall honours would envy the man who on his initial appearances could boast such a result. As will soon be seen they paved the way for other things.

"Mrs. Bret Harte, care of Mrs. Knanfft,
45 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

"Crefeld, *March* 15, 1879.

"My dear Nan,—I have just received yours of the 27th February. I was inexpressibly shocked to hear of poor Brantz Mayer's death. Since I have been here I have lived so much in the atmosphere of old recollections that I suppose it was not strange that for the last two or three days I have been thinking of him, and of my visit to Baltimore just a year ago. His death, which I saw in the telegraphic news, came home to me at once.

"I was very much worried about Frankie's illness; and in fact I am dreading the horrible spring weather of New York and its effect upon you and the children. The only consolation I can give you is that it is as inclement and sickly here. This district is full of diphtheria and scarlet fever, and my Vice-Consul's children have been very sick with both. I also have been suffering from a succession of colds—almost a repetition of my last year's experience at Sea Cliff—became quite alarmed last week at the state of my throat, and feared I had 'caught something,' for my office is in the V.-C.'s house. But the doctor said it was only a kind of 'epidemic sympathy,' &c., &c.

"Worse than that, I've been tempted by an offer of 85 guineas (nearly 450 dollars) to lecture in about ten days at a great English provincial city and perhaps elsewhere, and here I am down sick before the time comes. I hope to pull through it some way, however, and get the money.

"I am very seriously thinking of asking the Department to change my location. Germany is no place for me—I feel it more and more every day. So that if I do not hold out any hopes to you, it is because I do not know if I will stay here. There are so many places better for my health, for my literary plans, for my comfort, and for my purse than this. I shall write quietly to one or two of my Washington friends to see if it can be managed. I shall have made a good head here; by good luck I fear more than by management. The consular business will exceed this year any previous year, and I can hand over to the Government quite a handsome sum.

"I sat down to write you a long letter, but my cold leaves me so weak to-day I can hardly write, and I must keep up my strength to sign and record invoices.—God bless you all. FRANK."

This second lecturing tour was in every way successful. The late Mr. D'Oyley Carte had arranged things admirably for him; he visited some of the largest English cities and townships, the terms given him were liberal, and everywhere he was received with enthusiasm. It was during this tour that he first became a guest in my home, and he seemed to be in the best of health and spirits. His power and humour as a lecturer had been made known, and the people flocked to see him.

But he was soon back in Crefeld and at his weary task of signing and recording invoices. During these visits to England he made many new friends and accepted many invitations and engagements—more, perhaps, considering his naturally shy nature, than were advisable. It is, however, very difficult when face to face with a proposal that is not only kindly but in every respect highly complimentary, to say "no." It was probably with this feeling in his mind that he was induced to say "yes" when it was suggested that he should respond to the toast of

Literature at the Royal Academy Banquet of 1879. But when he was once more in Crefeld the thought of that half promise tortured him, and the horror of having to make an after-dinner speech worried his days and disturbed his nights. I mention this incident because it proves how he was really anxious to avoid anything that savoured of self-advertisement, and longed to be only known through his published works. But he had got into a dilemma, and it was difficult to get out of it. He could not plead that he was a bad speaker, because he had just proved himself to be a very admirable one; it was difficult for him to say that he could not possibly neglect his consular duties at that precise date because he had already said he should be able to attend the dinner. It never seemed to occur to him that any other man in his position would have been delighted at the distinction offered him. And so when the invitation took definite shape he hesitated, let things drift, and caused a little turmoil in London.

On April 28, Mr. G. H. Boughton, the celebrated artist, wrote to a mutual friend :—

"*April* 28, 1879.

"MY DEAR TRÜBNER, — I saw Sir Frederick Leighton yesterday at the Royal Academy, and he seemed to be in a vexed dilemma on account of not hearing from Bret Harte whether he would really reply to the toast of 'Literature.' Of course until he gets his answer he cannot ask any one else. He so admires Bret Harte—and we all do for that matter—that he wants *him* if possible. It will be a very grand occasion. The Prince of Wales and no end of bigwigs will be there, and I feel it a tremendous honour to Our Side that Harte is looked up to as the best man to reply. Do 'prod' him up to it; join my humble prayer to yours; send him this even: 'I shall never, *Never*, *Never!!!* forgive you, Bret Harte, if you don't reply at once like a good fellow and *say you will speak!*'—Ever yours sincerely,

G. H. Boughton."

This note was sent on to the delinquent, and, presumably with the "signing and recording invoices" on his mind, he endorsed it, "George H. Boughton, the American Artist,[1] and one of the greatest in England."

But though he thus showed his appreciation (that he really valued the letter is proved by the fact that he preserved it, and that it is now before me) and treated it from this business, consular-like point of view, it is to be feared he did not answer it!

In a day or two there came to the American Consul at Crefeld the following appealing telegram:—

"In despair. Cannot do without you. Please telegraph at once if quite impossible. Leighton, Royal Academy, London."

---

[1] Although Mr. Boughton in alluding to "Our Side" seems to confirm Bret Harte's claim to him as an American artist, he really belongs to England, for he was born in Norwich. When a baby he was taken to America and educated in Bret Harte's native city, Albany. Thus he gladly claimed him as a countryman.

There was no getting out of this, for the "reply" was paid; but the diffident Consul saw in it a loophole for his escape. Becoming supremely conscientious concerning the duties he owed to the "invoices," he telegraphed back that the extreme pressure of official engagements would make his presence and speech an impossibility.

But the affair was not allowed to rest there. His friend Froude wrote:—

"5 ONSLOW GARDENS, S.W., *May* 1, 1879.

"MY DEAR HARTE,—Your non-appearance at the Academy will be a great disappointment. We shall, however, count the more surely on your presence at the Literary Fund Dinner on the 7th. I was to have spoken there for Literature, but I have made over the office to you, and have assured the Committee that they may rely upon you. I meant to have asked a party to meet you here on the fifth or sixth, but the uncertainty and the unwillingness to hold you up to reprobation as a person not to be depended on forbid me to run the risk. I hope you have *written* to Leighton as well as telegraphed to him? The President of the Royal Academy is a sacred person, with the state and honours of a sovereign on these occasions. Alas that you should miss hearing the —— return thanks for the ——! You could have made a sketch out of it as good as

'Lothaw.'[1] You would also have heard 'Lothaw' himself. I could be as eloquent on what you are losing as Reineke Fuchs on the wonders of the treasure that was forthcoming to Nobel the King. Be sure to write to Leighton, as I am bail for your good behaviour.—Yours most truly,

J. A. FROUDE."

"You left your cigar-case here, which I keep *untouched* for you."

Thus admonished the now remorseful Consul did tardily write to Sir Frederick Leighton, and had for reply:—

"DEAR MR. BRET HARTE,—It was most kind of you to write to me after your telegram. I fully understand the impossibility of your leaving your post, and sincerely regret my loss.—Yours very truly,

FREDERICK LEIGHTON."

All these things must have touched the consular heart, for, subsequently, Bret Harte did speak for Literature at the Royal Academy Dinner, and acquitted himself right worthily. But he put off the evil day as long as he could. Thus it was with him throughout his life, and his trouble was neither nervousness nor lack of sociability, but an innate and very pleasant modesty which characterised him wherever he went, and among all sorts and conditions of people. "Hundreds of men," I have heard him say, "*like* to speak in public and to be reported in the papers. *I don't* like it. Why then can't people let *them* have their fill of enjoyment and leave *me* alone?"

---

[1] "Lothaw; or, The Adventures of a Young Gentleman in Search of a Religion," by Mr. Benjamins, was, it will be remembered, the title under which Bret Harte in his Condensed Novels delightfully burlesqued the style of Benjamin Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield).

But the Crefeld invoices were not to hold him long in thrall. On his behalf his American friends had loyally interested themselves, and his consular work was soon to be transferred to the far more homelike atmosphere of Glasgow.

Before taking leave of his sojourn in Germany, I must, *pace* those critics who persist in saying he could only write on topics Californian, again refer to the fact that wherever he might be he made excellent use of his surroundings. Let those who still doubt turn to his "Views from a German Spion," wherein he focussed the manners and customs of the people about him with a microscopic nicety. There is one episode in this "Eastern Sketch," as he called it, that almost pathetically illustrates the loneliness of his life in the "Fatherland." In referring to the "Carnival Season," he said:—

"It was at the close of a dull winter's day—a day from which all out-of-door festivity seemed to be naturally excluded; there was a baleful promise of snow in the air, and a dismal remini-

Bret Harte (circa 1899), from a photograph by Fall.

[*To face p.* 208.

scence of it underfoot, when suddenly, in striking contrast with the dreadful bleakness of the street, a half-dozen children, masked and bedizened with cheap ribbons, spangles, and embroidery, flashed across my *Spion*. . . . I seized my hat and *overcoat* —a dreadful incongruity to the spangles that had whisked by—and followed the vanishing figures round the corner. Here they were reinforced by a dozen men and women, fantastically but not expensively arrayed, looking not unlike the supernumeraries of some provincial opera troupe. Following the crowd, which already began to pour in from the side streets, in a few moments I was in the broad, grove-like *allée*, and in the midst of the *masqueraders*.

"I remember to have been told that this was a characteristic annual celebration of the lower classes, anticipated with eagerness and achieved with difficulty; indeed, often through the alternative of pawning clothing and furniture to provide the means for this ephemeral transformation. I remember being warned also that the buffoonery was coarse and some of the slang hardly fit for 'ears polite.' But I am afraid that I was not shocked at the prodigality of these poor people, who purchased a holiday on such hard conditions; and as to the coarseness of the performance, I felt that *I* certainly might go where these children could.

"At first the masquerading figures appeared to be mainly composed of young girls, of ages varying from nine to eighteen. Their costumes—if what was often only the addition of a broad, bright coloured stripe to the hem of a short dress could be called a *costume* — were plain, and seemed to indicate no particular epoch or character. A general suggestion of the peasant's holiday attire was dominant in all the costumes. Everybody was closely masked. All carried a short, gaily striped *bâton* of split wood, called a *Pritsche*, which, when struck sharply on the back or shoulders of some spectator or sister-masker, emitted a clattering, rasping sound. To wander hand-in-hand down this broad *allée*, to strike almost mechanically and often monotonously at each other with their *bâtons*, seemed to be the extent of their wild dissipation. The crowd thickened; young men with false noses, hideous masks, cheap black or red cotton dominoes, soldiers in uniform, crowded past each other up and down the promenade, all carrying a *Pritsche*, and exchanging blows with each other, but always with the same slow seriousness of demeanour, which with their silence gave the performance the effect of a religious rite. Occasionally some one shouted, perhaps a dozen young fellows broke out in song; but the shout was provocative of nothing, the song faltered as if the singers were frightened at their own voices. One blithe fellow, with a bear's head on his fur-capped shoulders began to dance, but on the crowd stopping to observe him seriously, he apparently thought better of it, and slipped away.

Nevertheless, the solemn beating of *Pritsche* over each other's backs went on. I remember that I was followed the whole length of the *allée* by a little girl, scarcely twelve years old, in a bright striped skirt and black mask, who from time to time struck me over the shoulders with a regularity and sad persistency that was peculiarly irresistible to me; the more so as I could not help thinking that it was not half as amusing to herself. Once only did the ordinary brusque gallantry of the Carnival spirit show itself. A man with an enormous pair of horns, like a half-civilised satyr, suddenly seized a young girl and endeavoured to kiss her. A slight struggle ensued, in which I fancied I detected in the girl's face and manner the confusion and embarrassment of one who was obliged to overlook, or seem to accept, a familiarity that was distasteful, rather than be laughed at for prudishness or ignorance; but the incident was exceptional. Indeed, it was particularly noticeable to my American eyes to find such decorum where there might easily have been the greatest licence. I am afraid that an American mob of this class would have scarcely been as orderly and civil under the circumstances. They might have shown more humour, but there would have probably been more effrontery; they might have been more exuberant, they would certainly have been drunker. I did not notice a single masquerader unduly excited by liquor—there was not a word or motion from the lighter sex that could have been construed into an impropriety. There was something almost pathetic to me in this attempt to wrest gaiety and excitement out of these dull materials—to fight against the blackness of that wintry sky, and the stubborn hardness of the frozen soil with these painted sticks of wood—to mock the dreariness of their poverty with these flaunting raiments. It did not seem like them, or, rather, consistent with my idea of them. There was incongruity deeper than their *bizarre* externals; a half-melancholy, half-crazy absurdity in their action, the substitution of a grim spasmodic frenzy for levity, that rightly or wrongly impressed me. When the increasing gloom of the evening made their figures indistinguishable, I turned into the first cross-street. As I lifted my hat to my persistent young friend with the *Pritsche*, I fancied she looked as relieved as myself. If, however, I was mistaken—if that child's pathway through life be strewn with rosy recollections of the unresisting back of the stranger American—if any burden, O Gretchen, laid upon thy young shoulders be lighter for the trifling one thou didst lay upon mine, know then that I too am content."

No doubt those were somewhat doleful days for the isolated Consul of Crefeld. But, as his sketches and stories show, he made good use of them, and in due season established himself in Glasgow. The change gladdened his heart. To say nothing of the historical associations of Scotland, it was something for Bret Harte to be in the land of Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott. I doubt if any Scotchman knew their undying works better than this visitor from over the seas.

Amongst the friends he had made in London were M. Arthur and Madame Van de Velde. M. Van de Velde belonged to the Belgian Diplomatic Service; he was many years Councillor of Legation in London, and retired with the rank of Minister Resident, as he could not with his large family take an important appointment offered him at Mexico. Madame Van de Velde was the daughter of the Comtesse de Launay, wife of the Italian Ambassador in Berlin. Madame Van de Velde was a lady who had not only enjoyed singular opportunities of studying life in high places, but of great literary tastes and achievements, as witness her "Random Recollections of Courts and Society," "Cosmopolitan Recollections," "French Fiction of To-day," and other notable works, to say nothing of successful labours in different branches of the world of art and letters. She and her husband were enthusiastic admirers of the writings of Bret Harte, and he, never prone to very close friendships, found in them comrades after his own heart. In their hospitable London house he found, whenever he needed one, a second home, and the good influence of this pleasant association over his subsequent literary career will presently be seen.

To Madame Van de Velde he wrote some of his earliest experiences of Scotland.

"GLASGOW, *September* 10, 1880.

"MY DEAR MADAME VAN DE VELDE,—Why do you permit yourself to live at a place with such a name as 'South Sheen?' What is the 'sheen' anyway? Is it the glitter from the sea, or the genial effulgency of your presence that gives a name to your local habitation? And why 'South?'

"The photographs taken by —— are too atrocious to give to anybody, much less a critical and mischievous woman. So I have written to Germany for some of the old ones, taken in *real* sunlight, and I will keep my word with you when they come. There was a portrait of me in a magazine. You should see that remarkable picture. It is so faint, so spiritual, so ghostly and apparition-like that I am afraid to stay in the room with it in the dark.

"The weather has been preternaturally (I didn't know that word was really so *very* long, please excuse me!) fine all over Scotland, but most gracious, I think, at Innellan—a charming little watering-place on the west coast, where I go every night from Glasgow. I am sorry you do not like the seaside; but you must remember *this* is not the staring, over-dressed, negro-minstrel haunted, children-shovelling beach of Brighton, nor the fashionable, full-toiletted sands of Trouville or Etretat. It is a craggy shelf of tangled seaweed and rocks, blown over by foam and breeze; the gentlemen bathe from small boats in the offing, quite *au naturel*, and honest but awfully plain Scotch lassies apparently are baptized in long grey and black gowns and then stride home without stockings. But I have picked up some little health here and some little experience, both of which I need.

"The Scotch people are very queer, but in the main very kind and hospitable. I have no reason to complain. On my birthday, which became quite accidentally known to a few friends in the hotel, my table was covered with bouquets of flowers and little remembrances from cigar cases to lockets.

"As I am trying to get up a good reputation here I stay at my post pretty regularly, occasionally making a cheap excursion. This is a country for them. The other day I went to Staffa. It was really the only 'sight' in Europe that quite filled all my expectations. But alas! that magnificent, cathedral-like cave was presently filled with a howling party of sandwich-eating tourists, splashing in the water and climbing up the rocks. One should only go there alone, or with some sympathetic spirit. Permit me to suggest that we go there together!

Write me again. I like your letters. I'll keep my promise about the photograph and anything else you may ask of yours always,

BRET HARTE."

It was in 1880 that he made the acquaintance of a brother author, for whose work he had much admiration, William Black. In Sir Wemyss Reid's biography of that fascinating writer we get many glimpses of the Glasgow Consul. Speaking of an expedition to visit the ruined abbeys of Eastern Yorkshire, which was arranged by Sir George Wombwell of Balaclava fame, he says: "Black, Bret Harte, Mr. Shepard, the American Vice-Consul at Bradford, and myself were Sir George's guests. We met at York one Saturday morning in April, and as our host was not to arrive till dinner-time we resolved to spend the afternoon in a visit to the battlefield of Marston Moor. Black was delighted with all that he saw; delighted too with the companionship of Bret Harte and Shepard. . . . We were to dine at the Yorkshire Club that evening with Sir George Wombwell, and as Black, who had never met Sir George, and who was always shy of strangers, declared that he would not go to the dinner unless I went also, I accompanied the party to the club, though by rights I ought to have been in bed.[1] I remember few more lively evenings than that. Black and Bret Harte, whose acquaintance he had just made, vied with each other in the good stories they told and the repartees they exchanged."

The intimacy beween the two authors grew apace. On May 1st Black, writing to his suffering friend from the Reform Club, said, "Bret Harte went down to us at Brighton, and if we didn't amuse him he certainly amused us. He is coming down again next week."

And again on June 2nd. "Possess your soul in patience; it will be better for you in the end. And in a few weeks' time don't be surprised if Bret Harte and I come to look you up—that is if he is not compelled for mere shame's sake to go to his consular duties (!!!) at once. He is the most extraordinary globule of mercury-comet-aerolite-flash of lightning doing catherine wheels I ever had any experience of. Nobody knows where he is, and the day before yesterday I discovered here a pile of letters that had been slowly accumulating for him since February 1879. It seems he never reported himself to the all-seeing Escott" (the hall porter of the Reform Club), "and never asked for letters when he got his month's honorary membership last year. People are now sending letters to him from America addressed to me at Brighton! But he is a mystery and the cause of mystifications. I heard the other day that a Society paper had printed a minute account of how I had been driving Bret Harte and other friends in Yorkshire in a phaeton, had upset the whole concern, and half murdered nearly all the party."

---

[1] Unluckily, in scrambling over a hedge on the battlefield, Sir Wemyss Reid met with a serious and most painful accident, which crippled him for some months.

The sudden disappearances to which Black thus laughingly refers are accounted for by the fact that, while London attracted him, the Consul felt bound to put in many appearances at Glasgow, and he spent much of his time in travelling over the long distance that divides the two great cities.

Bret Harte conceived as great a liking for William Black as he had appreciation for his works. But he did not sympathise with him in all his pursuits, as witness this letter, written to the author of "A Daughter of Heth," one of the favourite modern books of the author of "The Luck of Roaring Camp":—

"MY DEAR BLACK,—I was in the far south, trying to get rid of an obstinate cold, when your note reached me; and I haven't been in London for some time. I expected you to drop in here (Glasgow) on your way up to 'Balnagownie's arms'—whoever she may be. I'm afraid I don't want any 'Ardgay' in mine, thank you. Why any man in this damp climate should want to make himself wetter by salmon fishing passes my comprehension. Is there no drier spot to be had in all Great Britain? I shudder at the name of a river, and shiver at the sight of any fish that isn't dried. I hear, too, that you are in the habit of making poetry on these occasions, and that you are dropping lines all over the place. How far is that place—anyway? I shall be in Glasgow until the end of March, and if you'll dry yourself thoroughly and come in and dine with me at that time, I'll show you how 'the labouring poor' of Glasgow live.—Yours always,
BRET HARTE."

In his most interesting and valuable volume, Sir Wemyss Reid gives another pleasant picture of the two writers. Quoting Mr. Bradbury, he says: "Mr. Bret Harte, when he was American Consul at Glasgow, often visited Black at Oban. On one occasion a German band had taken up its position in front of the Alexandra Hotel, where the two novelists were staying, and was braying out its brazen music with great vigour. Presently a Highland piper took up his position near the band, and with mincing step and many flourishes gave full voice to his instrument. 'I just bet the piper will beat the Teutons,' said Mr. Harte. And he was right. The band retired discomfited. 'But that isn't the real piping at all,' observed Black. 'Is the real thing, then, more intense?' asked Harte. 'Yes; you should hear a band of pipers, say at Edinburgh. Their combined music was once described by an entranced listener as "Jest like Paradise." Was it not Sydney Smith who said that his idea of heaven was eating *foie gras* to the sound of trumpets? A Scotchman would have said bagpipes instead of trumpets.'"

Poor Bret Harte! Remembering his delicate ear for music I can fancy him saying to himself, with one thought for the brazen blasts of Anglicised Germany and another for the shrilling wood-wind of our well-loved Scotland, "I'm afraid I don't want any Paradise in mine, thank you."

He grew very fond of Black and kept many of his letters. To show the genial nature of their friendship I may quote from one or two of them.

"BRIGHTON.

"MY DEAR HARTE,—Where are you concealing yourself now? Are you likely to be anywhere on Saturday the 23rd? I am giving some of the boys a little sustenance on an occasion of mutual interest. I should be exceeding glad if you would step into the Reform Club at 7.45.—Yours always,

WILLIAM BLACK."

"LEEDS.

"Received from Bret Harte One Razor, in very good condition—*considering*. WILLIAM BLACK."

"REFORM CLUB.

"MY DEAR YOUTH,—I have just heard that you are in London, and send a note to your former address on chance. If you are disengaged on Sunday night will you run down to Brighton and contemplate the vast ocean? I have scarcely been three seconds in one place for the last two months; and it was by the merest accident I have just heard of your having come south.—Yours very faithfully,

WILLIAM BLACK."

"BRIGHTON.

"MY DEAR HARTE,—There's a man called John Hay in London just now. They say he has written things. It would be very odd if you were to walk into the Reform Club on June 1st at 7 P.M., and sit down to dinner with him; and then you might come down here next day for a night or two.—Yours faithfully, WILLIAM BLACK."

"*P.S.* — There's another man called Lawrence Barrett who's going to eat food on the same evening at the same place."

I quote these letters to show that there were many inducements for the Glasgow Consul to "come South." He liked Black and his côterie, and was of course rejoiced at the opportunity of meeting his old American friends. Sometimes, and by some people, he was blamed for not "staying North," but he had men with him at the Consulate upon whom he could absolutely rely, and it was only natural that he should escape as often as he could from his monotonous official duties, take his hands to the fire of life, and warm them. If some who called were irate at not finding him at his post they could at least see the admirable portrait of him that hung over the chimney-piece, and which is now in my possession. For Colonel John Hay, who had "written things," he retained a life-long affection, and the highest admiration. He was fond of saying that the "Pike County Ballads," with their immortal stories of "Little Breeches," and Jim Bludso's heroic death in the wreck of the *Prairie Bell* were finer than anything of that sort he had done himself, though, according to Mr. Noah Brooks, Colonel Hay "wrote those ballads to convince his friends that imitations were easily made, and it was long after their private publication that he consented to their translation into the immortality of print."

At the period with which I am now dealing, Colonel Hay was wont to send encouraging messages to the still somewhat lonely Consul, and they were carefully kept and cherished. Writing from the Department of State at Washington, he said:—

"I want before my sands run out to say 'How?' to you once more, and to assure you of my eternal love and esteem. . . . I do not know what Heaven meant by creating so few men like —— and you. The scarcity of you is an injury not only to us, but to yourselves. There are not enough of you to go round, and the world pulls and hauls at you till you are completely spoiled. . . . Well, good-bye, and good health and good spirits and everything good be yours. JOHN HAY."

Here are other specimens of his strong temptations to "come South:"—

"12 GAYTON CRESCENT, HAMPSTEAD.

"MY DEAR HARTE,—Don't forget your promise to 'fetch along' Howells and the other American men of letters now in London. Choose your own day for the dinner. If you will send me the list we will divide them out as guests. Howells is a member of the Club, and he would not be anybody's guest.—Very truly yours, WALTER BESANT."

"10 LOWNDES SQUARE, LONDON, S.W.

"DEAR HARTE,—Will you dine with us on the 10th? You will save us from the fatal number thirteen. We should, of course, have invited you earlier had we known you were in town. 'Tis Mrs. Lowell's first dinner-party, and would be made yet more historic by your presence.—Faithfully yours, J. R. LOWELL."

Here is another genial letter from Mr. Lowell, which should be quoted :—

"LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
"LONDON.

"DEAR HARTE,—Can you tell me whether *adobe* is pronounced *dis*-syllabically or *tri*-syllabically in California? I ask on behalf of the Philological Society's Dictionary.—Faithfully yours,

J. R. LOWELL."

"*P.S.*—Pray instruct whoever sends your telegrams that my name is not Dowell. In carpentry it has a better meaning than mine, but doesn't belong to me."

As the "adobe" question has troubled, and still troubles, many of Bret Harte's readers it may be explained here. It is pronounced as if spelt "ad-o-bay," and it designates the bricks made of earth and horsehair or straw, used without mortar, and in constant use for building purposes in early Californian days. Or it may mean the rich, unctuous loam used for this purpose, but of great fertile quality.

In addition to London allurements and distractions he was again in request as a lecturer, and as he could now fix his own fee, such engagements (though I am sure he never liked them) were not to be despised. How could he refuse such an offer as this?

"The Molt, 2nd October.

"My dear Harte,—The Hull people sent their invitation through me, I suppose because your movements, like those of Royalties and Cabinet Ministers, are reported in the newspapers, and they saw that you had been staying here. But they took action on their own account unprompted by me. They are anxious to see you. They are liberal, and therefore you may name your own terms. I think you may safely tell them, and tell every one who applies to you, that you must have £50 a lecture at least, and can go nowhere for less.

"Probably in many places they will offer you more, but we are taken in this world at our own estimate of ourselves, and if we rate ourselves high the more other people will give for us. I remember a tobacconist at Oxford who made his fortune by selling his cigars on that principle.

"Very likely you may think £50 much too little, and of course it is too little; all I mean is that this should be your lowest figure. Lecturing is hateful work. I always wondered how Emerson took so kindly to it.

"We are still in our summer quarters, but we flutter in a purposeless way up and down the walks like swallows before the emigration. We take wing in two or three weeks. Professor Owen tells us the birds move automatically on those occasions, and know nothing about it. I wish I could.

"We shall be visiting for two or three weeks in

December. With that exception, and assuming always that I do not go under in the course of it, we shall be the whole season in London without moving.

"Then we shall expect to see you.—Yours most truly,
J. A. Froude."

Leeds wanted to see him as well as Hull, and in that famous Yorkshire centre of industry he received a welcome of which he was very proud. Among the few papers he valued and kept was a copy of *The Leeds Mercury*, in which a writer who evidently understood him said—

"The recent visit of Mr. Bret Harte to Leeds reawakens public interest in one of the most memorable literary successes the world has ever known. Of Mr. Bret Harte himself, and the established position he has gained in the literary world, there can be no need to speak. He has long since taken his place among the great men of genius, by whom the glory of our English literature is sustained. It is quite certain that if we except Hawthorne, he is the most distinctive author America has yet given to the world. Other men, like Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier, and Emerson, have done splendid work, and have gained for themselves a great place in the literary hierarchy. But brilliant as their work is, it lacks the originality which marks a man like Bret Harte, as being the special outcome, as it were, of a new race, the pioneer of a new school of thought and work and culture. They are like miners who have achieved great and striking successes when working in old mines, the treasures of which had, in part at least, been made known to the world long before they appeared upon the scene. Mr. Harte, on the contrary, may be said to have tapped a new vein in literature, as rich and inexhaustible as those mines of mineral wealth which the pioneers in the settlement of California first discovered; and as one of the founders of the literature of the United States he will hereafter, without doubt, hold a leading place among the classical authors of that great country. No one can read his poems and tales without being struck by the fact that in him, as in so many of the great writers of all countries and ages, humour and pathos are blended together in the closest union. At one moment he provokes to laughter, at another to tears. To speak of him as being, like Mark Twain, for example, a mere humorist, is utterly absurd. It is indeed the poetical gift that he possesses in the highest degree, and it is to the poet's insight into human nature that he owes his brilliant success in literature. It has been his ability to see the soul of good lying under the evil exterior, his power of showing us in the simplest and yet the most forcible manner how, among the wild, rough, hardened, and too often degraded men and women who were the founders of that new America which lies on the western seaboard of the mighty continent, human virtues were to be found, as tender and sweet and noble as any that the most refined society in Europe could produce, that has given for him his wonderful hold upon the reading world. Like Charles Dickens, whom in many most essential respects he resembles, he has employed his splendid powers of humour, not to caricature, but to illustrate human life and human nature; and some of the most brilliant of his humorous pieces have been written with a very serious intent."

Then there were visits to country houses, where he was always a welcome member of a genial house-party, and when he from time to time (but not very enthusiastically, I think) took part in British sport.

On one of these occasions he wrote to me from Innellan—

"My dear Pemberton,—Don't be alarmed if you should hear of my having nearly blown the top of my head off. Last Monday I had my face badly cut by the recoil of an overloaded gun. I do not know yet beneath these bandages whether I shall be permanently marked. At present I am invisible, and have tried to keep the accident a secret.

"When the surgeon was stitching me together the son of the house, a boy of twelve, came timidly to the door of my room. 'Tell Mr. Bret Harte it's all right,' he said; '*he killed the hare!*'—Yours always,

Bret Harte."

But consular duties (however slight they may have been), lectures, and diversions in town and country, combined to make his pen an idle one, a fact that his truest friends deeply regretted. In the March of 1882 he was deeply distressed to hear of the death of Longfellow, and then he sat down to his desk to pay his tribute to a poet of whose work he could never speak too highly. He seemed to set little store by his article, and did not publish it in his collected writings. Except by a few it is to-day forgotten, but in his biography it must surely have an honoured place.

"LONGFELLOW.

"As I write the name that stands at the head of this page my eyes fill with far-off memory. While I know that every reader to whom that name was familiar felt that it recalled to him some thought, experience, or gentle daily philosophy which he had made his own, I fear that I, reading the brief message that flashed his death under the sea and over a continent, could not recall a line of his poetry, but only revived a picture of the past in which he had lived and moved. But this picture seemed so much a part of himself, and himself so much a part of his poetry, that I cannot help transferring it here. Few poets, I believe, so strongly echoed their song in themselves, in their tastes, their surroundings, and even in their experiences, as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

"I am recalling a certain early spring day in New England twelve years ago. A stranger myself to the climate for over seventeen years, that day seemed to me most characteristic of the transcendent inconsistencies of that purely local phenomenon. There had been frost in the early morning, followed by thaw; it had rained, it had hailed, there had been snow. The latter had been imitated in breezy moments of glittering sunshine by showers of white blossoms that filled the air. At nightfall, earth, air, and sky stiffened again under the rigour of a north-east wind, and when at midnight with another lingering guest we parted from our host under the elms at his porch, we stepped out into the moonlight of a winter night. 'God makes such nights,' one could not help thinking in the words of one of America's most characteristic poets; one was only kept from uttering it aloud by the fact that the host himself was that poet.

"The other guest had playfully suggested that he should be my guide home in the midnight perils that might environ a stranger in Cambridge, and we dismissed the carriage, to walk the two miles that lay between our host's house on the river Charles and his own nearer the centre of this American university city. Although I had met him several times before in a brief week of gaiety, until that evening I do not think I had clearly known him. I like to recall him at that moment, as he stood in the sharp moonlight of the snow-covered road; a dark mantle-like cloak hiding his evening dress, and a slouched felt hat covering his full silver-like locks. The conventional gibus or chimney-pot would have been as intolerable on that wonderful brow as it would on a Greek statue, and I was thankful there was nothing to interrupt the artistic harmony of the most impressive vignette I ever beheld. I hope that the enthusiasm of a much younger man will be pardoned when I confess that the dominant feeling in my mind was an echo of one I had experienced a few weeks before, when I had penetrated Niagara at sunrise on a Sunday morning after a heavy snowfall and found that masterpiece unvisited, virgin to my tread, and my own footsteps the only track to the dizzy edge of Prospect Rock. I was to have the man I most revered alone with me for half-an-hour in the sympathetic and confidential stillness of the night. The only excuse I have for recording this enthusiasm is that the only man who might have been embarrassed by it never knew it, and was as sublimely unconscious as the waterfall.

"I think I was at first moved by his voice. It was a very deep baritone without a trace of harshness, but veiled and reserved as if he never parted entirely from it, and with the abstraction of a soliloquy even in his most earnest moments. It was not melancholy, yet it suggested one of his own fancies as it fell from his silver-fringed lips

'Like the water's flow
Under December's snow.'

It was the voice that during our homeward walk flowed on with kindly criticism, gentle philosophy, picturesque illustration, and anecdote. As I was the stranger, he half earnestly, half jestingly kept up the rôle of guide, philosopher, and friend, and began an amiable review of the company we had just left. As it had comprised a few names, the greatest in American literature, science, and philosophy, I was struck with that generous contemporaneous appreciation which distinguished this Round Table, of whom no knight was more courtly and loving than my companion. It should be added that there was a vein of gentle playfulness in his comment, which scarcely could be called humour, an unbending of attitude rather than a different phase of thought or turn of sentiment; a relaxation from his ordinary philosophic earnestness and truthfulness. Readers will remember it in his playful patronage of the schoolmaster's sweetheart in the 'Birds of Killingworth,'

> 'Who was, as in a sonnet he had said,
> As pure as water, and as good as bread.'

Yet no one had a quieter appreciation of humour, and his wonderful skill as a *raconteur*, and his opulence of memory, justified the saying of his friends, that 'no one ever heard him tell an old story or repeat a new one.'

"Living always under the challenge of his own fame, and subject to that easy superficial criticism which consists in enforced comparison and rivalry, he never knew envy. Those who understood him will readily recognise his own picture in the felicitous praise intended for another, known as 'The Poet,' in the 'Tales of a Wayside Inn,' who

'did not find his sleep less sweet
For music in some neighbouring street.'

"But if I was thus, most pleasantly because unostentatiously, reminded of the poet's personality, I was equally impressed with the local colour of his poetry in the surrounding landscape. We passed the bridge on which we had once stood at midnight, and saw, as he had seen, the moon

'Like a golden goblet falling
And sinking in the sea';

we saw, as Paul Revere once saw,

'the gilded weathercock
Swim in the moonlight,'

and passing a plain Puritan church, whose uncompromising severity of style even the tender graces of the moon could not soften, I knew that it must have been own brother to the 'meeting-house' at Lexington, where

'windows, blank and bare,
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,
As if they already stood aghast,
At the bloody work they would look upon.'

"Speaking of these spiritual suggestions in material things, I remember saying that I thought there must first be some actual resemblance, which unimaginative people must see before the poet could successfully use them. I instanced the case of his own description of a camel as being 'weary' and 'baring his teeth,' and added that I had seen them throw such infinite weariness into that action after a day's journey as to set spectators yawning. He seemed surprised, so much so that I asked him if he had seen many—fully believing he had travelled in the desert. He replied simply, 'No,' that he had 'only seen one once in the *Jardin des Plantes*.' Yet in that brief moment he had noticed a distinctive fact, which the larger experience of others fully corroborated.

"We reached his house—fit goal for a brief journey filled with historical reminiscences, for it was one of the few old colonial mansions, relics of a bygone age, still left intact. A foreigner of great distinction had once dwelt there; later it had been the head-quarters of General Washington. Stately only in its size and the liberality of its offices, it stood back from the street, guarded by the gaunt arms of venerable trees. We entered the spacious central hall, with no sound in the silent house but the ticking of that famous clock on the staircase—the clock whose 'Forever—never! Never—forever!' has passed into poetic immortality. The keynote of association and individuality here given filled the house with its monotone; scarcely a room had not furnished a theme or a suggestion, found and recognised somewhere in the poet's song; where the room whose tiled hearth still bore the marks of the grounding of the heavy muskets of soldiery in the troublous times; the drawing-room still furnished as Washington had left it; the lower stairway, in whose roofed recess the poet himself had found a casket of love-letters which told a romance and intrigue of the past; or the poet's study, which stood at the right of the front door. It was here that the ghosts most gathered, and as my guide threw aside his mantle and drew an easy-chair to the fireside, he looked indeed the genius of the place. He had changed his evening dress for a black velvet coat, against which his snowy beard and long flowing locks were strikingly relieved. It was the costume of one of his best photographs; the costume of an artist who without vanity would carry his taste even to the details of his dress. The firelight lit up this picturesque figure, gleamed on the 'various spoils of various climes' gathered in the tasteful apartment, revealed the shadowy depths of the bookshelves, where the silent company, the living children of dead and gone poets, were ranged, and lost itself in the gusty curtains.

"As we sat together the wind began its old song in the chimney, but with such weird compass and combination of notes that it seemed the call of a familiar spirit. 'It is a famous chimney,' said the poet, leaning over the fire, 'and has long borne a local reputation for its peculiar song. Ole Bull, sitting in your chair one night, caught it quite with his instrument.'

"Under the same overpowering domination of himself and his own personality, here as elsewhere, I could not help remembering how he himself had caught and transfigured not only its melody, but its message, in that most perfect of human reveries, 'The Wind over the Chimney'—

'But the night wind cries, "Despair!
Those who walk with feet of air
   Leave no long enduring marks;
At God's forges incandescent
Mighty hammers beat incessant,
   These are but the flying sparks.

Dust are all the hands that wrought,
Books are sepulchres of thought;
   The dead laurels of the dead
Rustle for a moment only,
Like the withered leaves in lonely
   Churchyards at some passing tread.

Suddenly the flame sinks down;
Sink the rumours of renown;
   And alone the night wind drear
Clamours louder, wilder, vaguer,—
'Tis the brand of Meleager
   Dying on the hearthstone here!"

And I answer,—"Though it be,
Why should that discomfort me?
   No endeavour is in vain,
Its reward is in the doing,
And the rapture of pursuing
   Is the prize the vanquished gain."'

"Why should not the ghosts gather here? Into this quaint historic house he had brought the poet's retentive memory filled with the spoils of foreign climes. He had built his nest with rare seeds, grasses, and often the stray feathers of other song birds gathered in his flight. Into it had come the great humanities of life, the bridal procession, the christening, death—death in a tragedy that wrapped those walls in flames, bore away the faithful young mother and left a gap in the band of 'blue-eyed banditti' who used to climb the poet's chair. The keynote of that sublime resignation and tender philosophy which has overflowed so many hearts with pathetic endurance was struck here; it was no cold abstract sermon preached from an intellectual pulpit, but the daily lessons of experience, of chastened trial shaped into melodious thought. How could we help but reverence the instrument whose smitten chords have given forth such noble 'Psalms of Life'?

"Such is the picture conjured by his name. Near and more recent contact with him never dimmed its tender outlines. I like now to remember that I last saw him in the same quaint house, but with the glorious mellow autumnal setting of the New England year, and the rich, garnered fulness of his own ripe age. There was no suggestion of the end in his deep kind eyes, in his deep-veiled voice, or in his calm presence; characteristically it had been faintly voiced in his address to his classmates of fifty years before. He had borrowed the dying salutation of the gladiator in the Roman arena only to show that he expected death, but neither longed for it nor feared it."

With his intimate friends Bret Harte ever delighted to talk enthusiastically of Longfellow, and would declare that his poems had greatly influenced his thoughts and life. But he doubted if he was sufficiently appreciated in England. I remember once arguing with him on this point, and so far convincing him as to make him say: "Oh yes; no doubt the shorter poems, the perfect 'Psalm of Life'—the soothing 'Resignation,' and so forth, are well known—but who, for instance, really cares for 'Hiawatha'?—and yet 'Hiawatha' is not only a wonderful poem, but a marvellously true descriptive narrative of Indian life and lore." I think he knew it all by heart. And yet, notwithstanding all his almost indignant fervour concerning it he was soon set heartily laughing when he was reminded how W. S. Gilbert had cleverly travestied the "Hiawatha" methods in his "Princess Toto."

Bret Harte's happily renewed industry as an author was largely due to the kindly interest of his good friend Madame Van de Velde. It troubled her to think that a hand, capable of doing such unique and invaluable work, should be turning itself to things well within the reach of less gifted men. Therefore she did everything within her power to induce him to sit at his desk and continue his literary labours. He needed such an earnest adviser, for, as I have already said, he did not like authorship for its own sake, and he was ever prone to undervalue his own power. But, being well and discreetly urged, he set to work again, and one of the first stories he wrote on British soil was the eminently characteristic Californian romance, "Found at Blazing Star."

Directly the Glasgow Consul took pen in hand the old pictures, in vivid colours, were flashed upon the screen, and it was easy for him in far-off Scotland to write—

"The rain had only ceased with the grey streaks of morning at Blazing Star, and the settlement awoke to a moral sense of cleanliness, and the finding of forgotten knives, tin cups, and smaller camp utensils, where the heavy showers had washed away the débris and dust heaps before the cabin doors. Indeed, it was reported in Blazing Star that a fortunate early riser had once picked up on the highway a solid chunk of gold quartz, which the rain had freed from its encumbering soil and washed into immediate and glittering popularity. Possibly this may have been the reason why early risers in that locality during the rainy season adopted a thoughtful habit of body, and seldom lifted their eyes to the rifted or india-inked washed skies above them."

He sent this story, with others, to Colonel John Hay, and from Paris received this interesting criticism of his efforts—

"Mrs. Hay and I have been reading 'Flip' and 'Found at Blazing Star.' 'Flip' is beyond criticism, but 'Blazing Star'—I say it boldly—is too short. You had the material of a magnificent long story, and you have condensed it so that it is as hard to keep up with you as for a dog running after an express train to enjoy the scenery. Any other man living would have padded it up to three times its size—but you always did run to nuggets. Why should you spare the publisher by giving him unalloyed metal when eighteen carat would suit him so much better?

"When is that play coming out? I will come to London for that if I have strength enough to lie in a gutter and call for a coach. . . . What a charming story Besant's 'Revolt of Man' is! I read it on Sunday with breathless interest and continued delight.—Yours faithfully, my dear Harte,

JOHN HAY."

With the craft once more under way the oarsman did not fail, but rowed steadily on until he had the satisfaction of knowing that his work was as highly prized and as eagerly secured in England as in America. Whether if he had not been well coached and cheered from the bank-sides he would have faltered, one cannot say. But he enjoyed the encouragement of true friends, and he was grateful for it. His sense of indebtedness to Madame Van de Velde, who not only advised but practically helped him, is shown in the following letter:—

"LONDON, 18*th May* 1883.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—When I beg you to accept the enclosed portfolio I do not for a moment ever expect it to supplant the memory of the old one which is endeared to me by the recollection of the hours you have spent over it in deciphering my exasperating manuscripts and making them intelligible to the printer, or in giving them another chance for immortality by clothing them in the language of your own native land. I am only trying to symbolise in this little gift something of my gratitude to you as amanuensis, translator, critic, and above all—friend.

"I am not King of France or I should quote to *my* Prime Minister the words of Louis to Richelieu: 'Lord Cardinal, you must take up again the *portfolio* you have laid down. In all my empire there is none worthy to follow you.'—Always, dear friend, yours most gratefully, BRET HARTE."

Madame Van de Velde.

Once more, as many of his stories show, he took his tone from his surroundings, and Scotland has a prominent place in many of his writings. He was interested in all he saw there, and in a wonderfully short time achieved a mastery of the rather difficult Scottish dialect. This is nowhere better shown than in some burlesque rhymes he sent to his artist friend, Mr. Alexander Stuart Boyd—

SCOTCH LINES TO A. S. B.

(From an Unintelligent Foreigner.)

"We twa hae heard the gowans sing,
Sae soft and dour, sae fresh and grey;
And paidlet in the brae, in Spring,
To scent the new mown 'Scots wha hae.'

But maist we loo'ed at e'en to chase
  The pibroch through each wynd and close,
Or climb the burn to greet an' face
  The skeendhus gangin' wi' their Joes.

How aft we said 'Eh, Sirs!' and 'Mon!'
  Likewise 'Whateffer'—apropos
Of nothing. And pinned faith upon
  'Aiblins'—though why we didna' know.

We've heard nae mon say 'gowd' for 'gold,'
  And yet wi' all our tongues upcurled,
We—like the British drum beat rolled
  Our 'Rs' round all the speaking worruld.

How like true Scots we didna care
  A bawbee for the present tense,
And said 'we will be' when we *were*,
  'Twas bonny, but it wasna sense.

And yet 'ma frien' and 'trusty frere,'
  We'll take a right gude 'Willie Waught,'
Tho' what *that* may be is not clear,
  Nor where it can be made or bought."

Of this little achievement, written in sheer high spirits, Bret Harte was inclined to be proud; and when he told me of it, and quoted from it, I never reminded him (for Dickens-lover though he was, he had clearly forgotten the circumstance) that David Copperfield, in describing a convivial evening spent with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber, had said, "We sang 'Auld Lang Syne.' When we came to 'Here's a hand, my trusty frere,' we all joined hands round the table, and when we declared we would 'take a right gude Willie Waught,' and hadn't the least idea what it meant, we were really affected;" or that at another memorable gathering, when Mr. Micawber was proposing the health of "My friend, Copperfield," he remarked that:—

"'We twa hae run about the braes
And pu'd the gowans fine'

—in a figurative point of view—on several occasions. I am not exactly aware what gowans may be, but I have no doubt that Copperfield and myself would frequently have taken a pull at them, if it had been feasible."

Mr. Boyd illustrated several of his stories, and Bret Harte, always difficult to please in such matters, was delighted with the way in which he depicted his characters.

One of his best studies of Scotch life and character is to be found in his pretty tale, "Young Robin Gray," and as it gives us a peep into his consular life it is well to recall a fragment of it here:—

"The good American barque *Skyscraper* was swinging at her moorings in the Clyde off Bannock, ready for sea. But that good American barque—although owned in Baltimore—had not a plank of American timber in her hulk, nor a native American in her crew, and even her nautical 'goodness' had been called into serious question by divers of that crew during her voyage, and answered more or less inconclusively with belaying-pins, marlin-spikes, and ropes' ends at the hands of an Irish-American captain and a Dutch and Danish mate. So much so that the mysterious powers of the American consul at St. Kentigern had been evoked to punish mutiny on the one hand, and battery and starvation on the other, both equally attested by manifestly false witnesses and subordination on each side. In the exercise of his functions, the consul had opened and shut some jail doors, and otherwise effected the usual sullen and deceitful compromise, and his flag was now flying, on a final visit, from the stern sheets of a smart boat alongside. It was with a feeling of relief at the end of the interview that he at last lifted his head above an atmosphere of perjury and bilge water, and came on deck. The sun and wind were ruffling and glinting on the broadening river beyond the 'measured mile;' a few gulls were wavering and dipping near the lee scuppers, and the sound of Sabbath bells, mellowed by a distance that secured immunity of conscience, came peacefully."

Presently he heard an altercation between pretty Ailsa Callender's tough old father, and the boatman who had brought them from shore to say farewell to a passenger on *The Skyscraper*, the oarsman being now inclined to demand an extra fee for returning with them.

"The boatman alleged that he had been detained beyond 'kirk time,' and that this imperilling of his salvation could only be compensated by another shilling. To the consul's surprise, this extraordinary argument was recognised by the father, who, however, contented himself by simply contending that it had not been stipulated in the bargain. The issue was, therefore, limited, and the discussion progressed slowly and deliberately with a certain calm dignity and argumentative satisfaction on both sides that exalted the subject, though it irritated the captain. 'If ye accept the premisses that I've just laid down, that it's a contract,' began the boatman. 'Dry up and haul off,' said the captain.

"'One moment,' interposed the consul, addressing the father, 'Will you allow me to offer you and your daughter a seat in my boat? . . .'

"'It'll be costin' ye no more?' said the old Scotchman, 'or ye'll be asking me a fair proportion.'

"Being reassured on this point, he added—'Ay, but it's a preenciple, and I'm pleased, sir, to see ye recognise it.'

"And then as an exordium for the benefit of the baffled boatman, still lying on his oars, he concluded—

"'Let this be a lesson to ye, ma frien', when ye're ower sure! Ye'll ne'er say a herrin' is dry until it be reestit an' recket.'

"As they pulled across the Clyde (surely St. Kentigern was very close to Glasgow!), the consul said—for his passengers had missed the train by which they had intended to return home—

"'There's an excursion boat coming round the

Point, and it will be returning to St. Kentigern shortly. If you like, we'll pull over and put you aboard.'

"'Eh! but it's the Sabbath-breaker,' said the old man harshly.

"The consul suddenly remembered that that was the name which the righteous St. Kentigerners had given to the solitary bold bad pleasure-boat that defied their Sabbatical observances.

"'Perhaps you won't find very pleasant company on board,' said the consul, smiling; 'but then you're not seeking *that*. And as you would be only using the boat to get back to your home, and not for Sunday recreation, I don't think your conscience should trouble you.'

"'Ay, that's a fine argument, Mr. Consul, but I'm thinking it's none the less sopheestry for a' that,' said the father grimly.

"'No; if ye'll just land us yonder at Bannock pier we'll be aye thankin' ye the same.'"

The American Consul at St. Kentigern's did *not* tell his passengers that the American Consul at Glasgow—one Mr. Bret Harte—was a constant patron of the Sabbath-breaker, and thereby caused much uneasiness to those who desired him to spend the seventh day in their own austere way. He was a discreet consul, and no doubt he wished to stand well in the beautiful brown eyes of pretty Ailsa Callender, as sweet and winsome a Scotch lassie as ever limned by writer—aye even by the master hand of William

Black. In the following passage Glasgow is undeniably revealed:—

"The December fog that overhung St. Kentigern had thinned sufficiently to permit the passage of a few large snowflakes, soiled in their descent, until in colour and consistency they spotted the steps of the Consulate and the umbrellas of the passers by like sprinklings of grey mortar. Nevertheless, the consul thought the streets preferable to the persistent gloom of his office, and sallied out. Youthful mercantile St. Kentigern strode sturdily past him in the lightest covert coats; collegiate St. Kentigern fluttered by in the scantiest of red gowns, shaming the furs that defended his more exotic blood; and the bare feet of a few factory girls, albeit their heads and shoulders were draped and hooded in thick shawls, filled him with a keen sense of his effeminacy. Everything of earth, air, and sky, and even the faces of those he looked upon, seemed to be set in the hard, patient endurance of the race. Everywhere on that dismal day he fancied he could see this energy without restlessness, this earnestness without geniality, all grimly set against the hard environment of circumstance and weather."

In "A Rose of Glenbogie" there is another finely drawn cabinet picture of Scotch character, and the impression it made on the American mind. The Consul of St. Kentigern is standing on the lonely platform of Whistlecrankie station waiting for an expected carriage, when he finds himself in the company of a railway porter. "He was a hard-featured man, with a thin fringe of yellow-grey whiskers under his chin like dirty strings to tie his cap on with.

"'Ye'll be going to "Glenbogie House," I'm thinkin',' he said moodily.

"The consul said he was.

"'I kenned it. Ye'll be no gettin' any machine to tak' ye there. They'll be sending a carriage for ye—if ye're *expected.*' He glanced half doubtfully at the consul as if he was not quite so sure of it.

"The consul explained that he was expected, and then the porter surveyed him gloomily and remarked—

"'Ye'll be seein' Mistress MacSpadden there!'

"The consul was surprised into a little over consciousness. Mrs. MacSpadden was a vivacious acquaintance at St. Kentigern, whom he certainly—and not without some satisfaction—expected to meet at Glenbogie House. He raised his eyes inquiringly to the porter's.

"'Ye'll be no remembering me. I had a machine in St. Kentigern and drove ye to MacSpadden's often. Far, far, too often! She's a strange, flagrantitious creature; her husband's but a puir fule, I'm thinkin', and ye did yersel' nae guid gaunin' there.'

"It was a besetting weakness of the consul's that his sense of the ludicrous was too often reached before his more serious perceptions. The absurd combination of the bleak, inhospitable desolation before him, and the sepulchral complacency of his self-elected monitor, quite upset his gravity.

"'Ay, ye'll be laughin' *the noo*,' returned the porter, with gloomy significance.

"The consul wiped his eyes. 'Still,' he said demurely, 'I trust you won't object to my giving you sixpence to carry my box to the carriage when it comes, and let the morality of this transaction devolve entirely upon me. Unless,' he continued even more gravely as a spic-and-span brougham, drawn by two thoroughbreds, dashed out of the mist up to the platform, 'unless you prefer to state the case to those two gentlemen'—pointing to the smart coachman and footman on the box—'and take *their* opinion as to the propriety of my proceeding any further. It seems to me that their consciences ought to be consulted as well as yours. I'm only a stranger here, and am willing to do anything to conform to the local custom.'

"'It's a saxpence ye'll be payin' anyway,' said the porter grimly, 'but I'll be no taking any other mon's opinion on matters of my ain dooty and conscience.'

"'Ah,' said the consul gravely, 'then you'll perhaps be allowing *me* the same privilege.'

"The porter's face relaxed, and a gleam of approval —purely intellectual however—came into his eyes.

"'Ye were always a smooth deevil wi' your tongue, Mr. Consul,' he said, shouldering the box and walking off to the carriage."

And yet people exist who declare, and apparently believe, that Bret Harte could only write about the early Californians!

He thus describes the drive to Glenbogie House:—

"The clattering of his horses' hoofs echoed back from the rocky walls that occasionally hemmed in the road was not enlivening, but it was less depressing than the recurring monotony of the open. The scenery did not suggest wildness to his alien eyes so much as it affected him with a vague sense of scorbutic impoverishment. It was not the loneliness of unfrequented Nature, for there was a well-kept carriage road traversing its dreariness; and even when the hillside was clothed with scanty verdure, there were 'outcrops' of smooth, glistening, weather-worn rocks showing like bare brown knees under the all too imperfectly-kilted slopes."

This was a favourite simile with Bret Harte, and he would laughingly declare that he was convinced that the Highlander had made his surroundings the pattern for the national costume—the curtailed kilt and the exposed knees.

He was rather apt to depreciate the beauties of Scotch scenery, but that was only when he thought they were over extolled by those who had never seen the grandeur of California. In his heart of heart he loved Scotland well, and its historical associations were a source of unfailing delight to him.

I fear he was not considered to be a very perfect Consul. As we have seen, his friends often lured him to London, and now that he was once more busy with his pen it engrossed much of his time. In one of his letters to Sir Wemyss Reid, William Black said: "Bret Harte was to have been back from Paris last night, but he is a wandering comet. The only place he is sure not to be found in is at the Glasgow Consulate." Reports of these things naturally reached America, and possibly it was thought that the duties of the Glasgow Consulate might be more happily fulfilled by one who did not happen to be an exceedingly popular author.

Mr. Noah Brooks says:—

"It is related that while he was still 'holding over' into the administration of a democratic president, that functionary, accompanied by his private secretary, Mr. Daniel Lamont, fishing in an Adirondack lake, took up a copy of the *New York Sun*, on which to dry his hands, and, catching sight of Harte's name at the head of a short story, fell to reading it, and never left it until he had finished it.[1] Tossing the paper overboard, he asked Lamont if the story-writer were not a Consul of the United States somewhere; and, receiving an affirmative answer, he said: 'Well, be sure and remind me to have him removed when we get back to Washington.' The tale cannot be verified, but Harte was removed in 1885, and thereafter, to the day of his death, he made his home in London."

---

[1] Many of his new stories were at this time printed in American newspapers and periodicals.

Concerning the life that opened to him there, and his manner of using it, I cannot do better than quote the following lines, written ten years later, by Madame Van de Velde, for the *New York Sun*:—

"It is difficult for an observant stranger to pass even a short time in Great Britain without becoming aware of a distinctively characteristic trait in the inhabitants; and it is impossible for any one who has lived a number of years there not to be absolutely convinced of its dominance. The Englishman, in his cold, undemonstrative fashion, is intensely patriotic; in his heart of hearts he firmly believes that in the scheme of creation he was formed out of special clay, while the remainder of human beings have been moulded from a much inferior material. He is equally sure that no effort of grace can ever raise the alien to his own level; but while he is piously grateful for this dispensation of Providence, he recognises and appreciates the right of the outsider to maintain an exalted opinion of his own country and nationality; he respects him for it even when he endeavours to prove it erroneous; nay, more, should his arguments successfully establish a recognition of his own superiority, he immediately ceases to entertain regard and toleration for the too easily persuaded stranger. This thoroughly English and so far honourable peculiarity is one of the reasons, apart from his merits as a literary celebrity, why Bret Harte is extremely popular in England, and has always been so.

"Before he took up his residence in London his genius and originality had won him admirers, but when he gave them the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the man, independently, as it were, of the author, they promptly ascertained that no more uncompromising American had ever set foot among them. Time has not dulled Bret Harte's instinctive affection for the land of his birth, for its institutions, its climate, its natural beauties, and, above all, the character and moral attributes of its inhabitants. Even his association with the most aristocratic representatives of London society has been impotent to modify his views or to win him over to less independent professions. He is as single-minded to-day as he was when he first landed on British soil. A general favourite in the most diverse circles, social, literary, scientific, artistic, or military, his strong primitive nature and his positive individuality have remained intact. Always polite and gentle, neither seeking nor evading controversy, he is steadfastly unchangeable in his political and patriotic beliefs. He has frequently been heard to express himself frankly on the vexed question of Anglo-American marriages, severely satirising those of his fair compatriots who, dazzled by the lustre of lordly alliances, have too closely assimilated with the land of their adoption, and apparently forgotten their own country. To such he has not hesitated to apply the term of 'apostates.'

"Bret Harte has maintained in his maturity the complete simplicity of manner which, coupled with extreme refinement of thought and speech, so deeply impressed those he met on his first arrival in England. Nor is it inconsistent with the distinct personality revealed in his writings, however dissimilar the man of the world must necessarily be to the creator of stirring romances, which frequently are but the records of personal experience. Yet it has been several times remarked that the appearance of Bret Harte does not coincide with the preconceived expectations of his readers. They had formed a vague, intangible idea of a wild, reckless Californian, impatient of social trammels, whose life among the Argonauts must have fashioned him after a type differing widely from the reality. These idealists were partly disappointed, partly relieved, when their American visitor turned out to be a quiet, low-voiced, easy-mannered, polished gentleman, who smilingly confessed that precisely because he had roughed it a good deal in his youth he was inclined to enjoy the comforts and avail himself of the facilities of an older civilisation, when placed within his reach. He also gently intimated that days on the top of a stage coach, or on the back of a mustang, and nights spent at poker, would not materially assist in the writing of the stories which are never produced fast enough to meet the demand.

"Bret Harte has persistently declined to be interviewed, and as the name of the professional reporters is legion, we dare say his refusal to receive them may have made him some enemies. But when, in a moment of good nature, he yielded to pressing solicitations and allowed himself to be questioned, the consequences were, on the whole, to his disadvantage. From that moment the door has been opened to a flood of apocryphal statements of various length and importance: sometimes entirely false, sometimes tinged with a dangerous verisimilitude; often grotesque, occasionally malicious, but one and all purporting to be derived from unquestionable sources. Thus the American humorist has been represented as sinking into the slough of sybaritic idleness; as working five hours before breakfast and recruiting by violent pedestrian exercise; he changed his clothes six times a day; he neglected his personal appearance; he had taken a big mansion in Norfolk and entertained on a large scale; he had hidden himself in a small cottage in the suburbs; he filled waste-paper baskets with torn notes of invitation; he wrote sheets and sheets of 'copy;' society women booked him months ahead to secure his presence at their receptions; he made thousands of pounds a year; he had ceased to write at all; he had become 'quite English, you know,' and had formally abjured America.

"Singularly enough, many of Bret Harte's countrymen in London did not take the trouble to verify these statements; they accepted them blindly, and thus they may have been reproduced in some American newspapers together with the account of the last début of a brilliant New York belle in London, or the detailed description of some millionaire's festival.

"When this mass of silly gossip is sifted the bare and simple truth remains that Bret Harte leads a quiet, simple, dignified, and useful existence; that he goes into society less than any other conspicuous American living in London; that he never threw over the humblest of his acquaintances for the highest or richest; that he is ever ready to oblige or assist a compatriot; that he faithfully and perseveringly devotes a portion of each day to his profession; and that he often has not known how his health and strength would enable him to meet the many engagements thrust upon him by publishers and editors.

"It has been said that Bret Harte's stories fetch bigger prices in the market than any similar form of literature of the present day. This is perhaps correct, but he does not consider himself justified on that account in relaxing his labours. He has obligations in America, and this claim upon him forms at once the motive and the reason of his prolonged stay in England, in spite of the inclination and desire so strong in his heart to revisit his native land.

"Bret Harte has more than once been asked to lecture in England on English customs and English society, but he has always demurred. He is too grateful for the welcome tendered to him to risk repaying it with the apparent discourtesy of censure; he is too honest and frank to give indiscriminate praise or to lay himself open to the reproach of flattery. Some day he may be persuaded to give the world the result of close, keen, and impartial observation; and we dare say he will do so in the spirit of conscientiousness and sincerity so characteristic of all his writings.

"When the day comes at last on which Bret Harte, after a long period of fruitful labours, realises his ardent wish of revisiting America; when New York and San Francisco hail his return, and the whole nation opens its arms to its long absent and distinguished son, the friends he has made in the old country will not forget him; and we are sure he will remember how they have cheered the time of his self-imposed exile, and how honestly patriotic Englishmen can care for a truly patriotic American."

How true all this is Bret Harte's English friends know. He was truly an "American worthy of the Flag;" he never failed to uphold it, and it is intensely sad to think that his premature death crushed his cherished wish to revisit his native land.

CHAPTER VII

IN AND ABOUT STAGELAND

BRET HARTE truly loved the theatre, and but for the fact that the demand for his stories fully occupied his time, he would have done much more work as a playwright than that associated with his name. He deplored it, but no writer worked harder than he, and it could not be helped. His one great personal effort as a dramatist was the four-act play entitled "Two Men of Sandy Bar," in which Mr. Stuart Robson, the admirable comedian for whom it was written, appeared as Colonel Starbottle, one of the best as well as one of the most popular of the author's creations. John Oakhurst, the gambler; Hop Sing, a Chinese laundryman; a Spanish Don, and a charming Doña, with other of his best known characters were also pressed into the service; the various scenes and the costumes gave every opportunity for picturesque stage treatment, and when the drama was ready for curtain rise all promised well. As this is the only produced play that bore the name of Bret Harte as its sole author, it is interesting to show a copy of the now almost forgotten playbill that heralded it.

PROGRAMME.

UNION SQUARE THEATRE,

NEW YORK, *September 1st*, 1876.

Proprietor	MR. SHERIDAN SHOOK.
Manager	MR. A. M. PALMER.

This and Every Evening and at the Saturday Matinées, until further notice, an Original American Comedy Drama, in 4 acts, written by Mr. Bret Harte, and entitled—

TWO MEN OF SANDY BAR.

Col. Culpepper Starbottle (legal adviser of Mr. Morton Sr.; "Responsible, personally responsible")	Mr. Stuart Robson
John Oakhurst	Mr. Theodore Hamilton
Sandy Morton	Mr. H. S. Murdoch
Don José Castro	Mr. H. F. Daly
Alexander Morton Sr. (in search of the "Prodigal")	Mr. T. E. Morris
Concho (Major Domo)	Mr. H. W. Montgomery
Hop Sing (Chinese Laundryman)	Mr. C. T. Parsloe
Pritchard (an Australian Convict)	Mr. Lysander Thompson
Soapy and *Silky* (his Pals)	Mr. Quigley Mr. Wilkes
Jackson (Confidential Clerk of Morton Sr. and Confederate of Pritchard)	Mr. John Mathews
Capper (a Policeman)	Mr. W. H. Wilder
Servant	Mr. H. Ayling
Miss Mary Morris (School-mistress of Sandy Bar, in love with Sandy, and cousin of Alexander Morton Sr.)	Miss Mary Carey
(By courtesy of Manager, R. M. Field of Boston Museum.)	
The Duchess (wife of Pritchard, illegally married to Sandy, and former "flame" of John Oakhurst)	Miss Ida Vernon

Donna Jovita Castro (in love with John Oakhurst)	Miss Laura Don
Manuela (Servant of Don José, and maid of Donna Jovita)	Miss Maud Harrison

Vaqueros, Male and Female Attendants, &c.

The Scenery which is all new has been painted by Mr. George Heister, from designs furnished by Mr. Richard Marston. It comprises the following:—

Act I.—The Rancho of the Blessed Innocents, and House of Don José Castro.

Act II.—The Gulch of Sandy Bar.

Act III.—Banking House of Alexander Morton Sr.

Act IV.—The Villa of Alexander Morton Sr. near San Francisco, with distant view of the city by moonlight.

The Music is entirely original, and is by Mr. H. Tissington.

Unfortunately the New York critics dealt very severely with the piece, and, much to Bret Harte's annoyance, unkind stories got afloat to the effect that Mr. Robson was sore with regard to the high price he had paid for it. How unfair this was is proved by the following letter from actor to author.

"The Arlington, Washington,
"*October* 6, 1876.

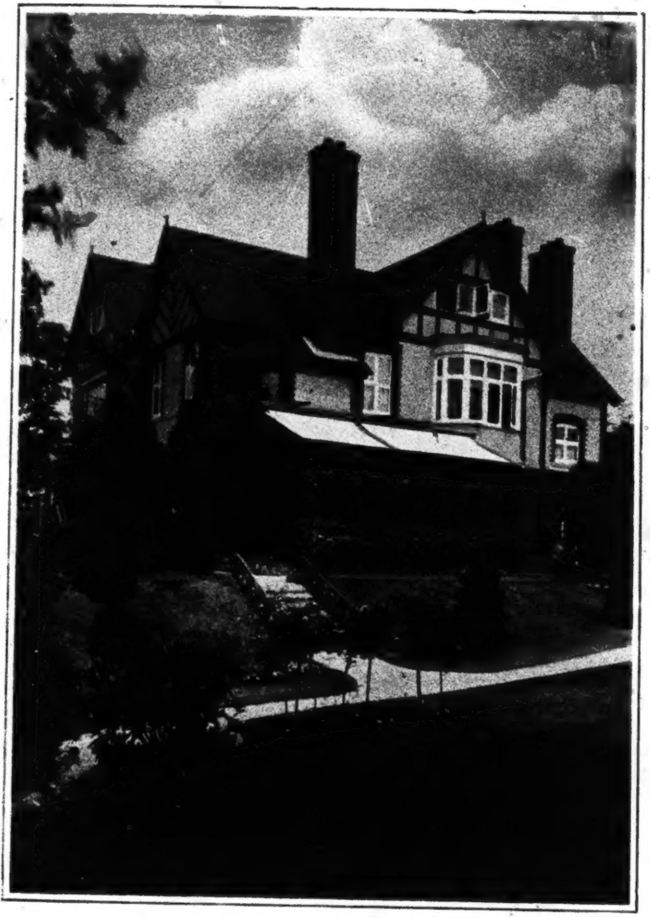
"My dear Bret,—You will be glad to hear that we are doing an excellent business, and that John T. Ford predicts even greater success in Baltimore. The papers are enthusiastic in praise of the play, and altogether I am well satisfied. Will you credit me with the fact that I have never lost faith in my venture? . . . The Washington papers have certainly treated us well, which, after the many misrepresentations made of the play, is most gratifying.—Believe me, your friend truly,

STUART ROBSON."

This generous letter consoled the vexed dramatist, but he never quite forgot the sting of the adverse criticisms, and the false innuendoes, and I think that is why he preferred story-telling to play-writing.

A number of familiar episodes in his early works found place in "Two Men of Sandy Bar," but the backbone of the play was an elaboration of Mr. Thompson's "Prodigal," which, as readers know, is full of strong situations. In its dramatic form humour and pathos alternated, and it makes delightful reading, but for acting purposes it had its faults. It was too full of good things, and Dion Boucicault told the author that it contained material for half-a-dozen plays. This was true, and another fault was that the admirably written dialogue was too much drawn out for the theatre. Writers of narrative often forget that the stage requires action rather than description, and that playgoers are apt to resent long speeches which in a book would be acceptable.

"Two Men of Sandy Bar" was by no means a failure, but it did not gain permanent popularity. That Bret Harte rightly thought well of it is proved by the fact that he had it published in his collected



The Red House, Camberley, Surrey. The house in which Bret Harte died.

[*To face p.* 260.

works. He was far too sensitive to print anything that did not find favour in his own eyes.

It will be noticed in the playbill that the part of Hop Sing, the Chinese laundryman, was played by Mr. C. T. Parsloe. This impersonation was so warmly welcomed that, in conjunction with Mark Twain, Bret Harte wrote a play entitled "Ah Sin," in which a Chinaman formed the central figure. With Mr. Parsloe in the name part it was produced in New York, but it did not attract lasting attention.

This, according to the disappointed playwright's way of looking at things, was another rebuff; but he must have tried his hand again, for among his papers was found a letter from Dion Boucicault (on whose opinion concerning dramatic work he placed absolute reliance), to whom he had evidently submitted some new play.

This unswerving faith in the judgment of the author of "London Assurance" and "The Colleen Bawn" was, I think, somewhat against him. He forgot that such plays were written for a bygone generation, and that the playgoers of to-day not only demand other fare, but desire that it shall be served up to them in far different fashion. But to the last he always quoted Boucicault as his great stage authority, though he sincerely admired the more subtle art of Pinero.

Here is the letter:—

"MY DEAR HARTE,—I have been held by a suit, which stood for trial yesterday; and by sticking to my counsel for three days, I so arranged that the 'other side' consented to a verdict in my favour.

"This has been a great relief to my mind. It is over. But this is the cause of my delay in attending to your play, which I have read this morning.

"First: I like it very much, especially the *Second Act*. You will find some pencil notes which I have ventured to make. At least they will prove the interest I took in my pleasant task.

"May I venture to say the melodramatic incidents in Act 3 might be arranged to accord better in tone with the first two acts?

"I don't care for Lady Washington.

"I fancy Paulding could be erected into a typical '*continental*' of the period, and might pervade the piece.

"Van Zanot might be made a Virginian who had been, previous to the war, in the regular English service.

"I fear the patriotic apostrophes are somewhat out of date, though quite appropriate at that time.

"The enthusiasm for France might jar on an English audience, and is not absolutely necessary.

"The national harangue might be given to Paulding, whose eagle spread would be *characteristic*, and *might* be made *sincere* and *grotesque* at the same time.

"Perhaps you will say *I* am so, therefore I will shut up.—Ever yours, DION BOUCICAULT."

Then there comes a second note, and it concerned that second act of which approval had previously been expressed:—

"MY DEAR HARTE,—Will you read this second act—see my notes. Tell me what you think. They entail considerable work, but it seems to me necessary.

"My work now is very incessant, and I have family cares that occupy me, so have been unable to get time to visit you.—Yours sincerely,

DION BOUCICAULT."

I suppose that troublesome second act disheartened the author. Be that as it may, the piece was never seen, and though when we were writing plays together he talked to me very fully of his theatrical experiences he never mentioned it. As a dramatist on his own account he seemed to lack confidence, and was prone to take the opinion of men whose judgment was not really as keen as his own. Of course, as a popular author, he was pestered by pirated stage versions of his stories, and he was maddened when he heard that his beautiful "Mliss" had, in his own country, been converted into a commonplace "song and dance" play, a form of entertainment that he loathed. The worst of it was that, not only was his name inevitably associated with the production, but that, owing to the popularity of the sprightly lady, Miss Annie Pixley, who was the Mliss of the stage (such a different Mliss from that of the story), it became a great success. It was performed, to Bret Harte's infinite distress, hundreds and hundreds of times. In America he seemed unable to put a stop to the piracy, but when its production in England was threatened he took legal advice, and was happily able to nip it in the bud.

But the episode evidently set him thinking that "Mliss" contained the material for a play of the right kind, and, in conjunction with his friend, Mr. Joseph Hatton, he made an adaptation of it. Of this work the latter well-known novelist, dramatist, and journalist has said:—

"I knew Bret Harte intimately, admired his work, and cherished a real affection for him. I have treasured memories of many a pleasant Sunday afternoon, in which he was a visitor at my house, and of some work done in collaboration with him, out of which we extracted a great deal of pleasure, though the play still lies on my shelves unacted. One day, as he seemed to be watching the smoke of his cigar over a cup of coffee after luncheon, he said: 'I should like to have time to write a long poem.' I forget whether he said a great poem, but I think he only said 'a long poem.' He meant that he would like to have time to do his very best in an important and sustained effort. Later, as we chatted in the same direction—the things one would like to do if one were not obliged to keep on doing something else—he added, 'I should prefer of all my attempts at playwriting to have this drama of ours produced.'

It was 'Mliss,' in the dramatisation of which he carried on his story into the later lives of those two fascinating people, Mliss and the Schoolmaster. The play was written for a very young actress, and was to have been produced under an enterprising London manager, who, however, insisted upon first presenting 'The Prince and the Pauper,' and so our opportunity fell to the ground."

The "very young actress" was Miss Bessie Hatton, and she would have played Mliss charmingly. The part of the Schoolmaster was designed for Mr. E. S. Willard. It should have suited him well. I never could understand why that lost opportunity was not regained. It is sad to think that a play over which two experts spent time and pains should lie forgotten on the shelf.

Mliss was no doubt one of Bret Harte's favourite "brain" children, but he never thought she was rightly understood by English readers. Edwin Long, R.A., painted a picture of the winsome maiden. "Yes," said "her parent" when he saw it, "a beautiful picture, but not my Mliss; it is the child of an English village, not the wild daughter of old Bummer Smith."

Speaking of this incident Mr. Hatton says:—"I expect the painter should have seen the environment of something like Smith's Pocket before he could quite understand Mliss, though Bret Harte drew her picture in his graphic way: a young girl, dirtily and shabbily clad, great black eyes, coarse, uncombed, lustreless hair falling over her sunburned face, red arms and feet, streaked with the red soil; such was Melissa Smith—Smith's 'motherless child.' The soul of the figure, the life and spirit, the courage, the nobility of the untutored nature he revealed to you with rare simplicity of diction and quaint illustration. It was necessary that Bret Harte should confide to me all he knew and imagined about the characters in his story, otherwise it was as difficult to get him to unburden himself concerning his work, his inspiration, and his methods as it would be to 'draw' Swinburne upon his. . . . You can understand what a delight it was to me to hear from Bret Harte's own lips all about Mliss and her father Bummer Smith; the schoolmaster and his financial troubles; the San Francisco banker; M'Snagley, over whose grotesquely humorous hypocrisy we had many a laugh; and the Bonebreaker, whom Bret Harte loved, I think, as dearly as he loved Mliss herself. I remember how he impressed upon me that the dress of Bonebreaker and his comrades had nothing in common with the American cowboy's attire, nor was in the least like the typical miner in slouch hat and red shirt. I have somewhere an approved sketch in colour of the miner of the Sierra Nevada and the region of Smith's Pocket—it was that of a picturesque Mexican vaquero. To listen to Bret Harte as he expanded the story of Mliss, her father's ultimate discovery of the gold, Clytie's intrigues against her rival, and what happened to Mliss and her lover, was to experience something of the æsthetic and selfish pleasure of the king who had a theatre to himself—he the only auditor, with Wagner as his author and manager. He was voted mad, but there was a splendid method in his madness. To know all about Mliss and what might have been the result of her educational training, and her future as the heiress of Bummer Smith on the accidental and wonderful realisation of his dearest hopes, is to me a romantic, though pathetic possession."

When it became my great good fortune to collaborate with Bret Harte in stage-work, I felt just as Mr. Hatton did. It was more than a privilege to hear him talk his heart out and to note the expressions on his face as the new ideas flashed into his mind. But he was very apt to grow despondent about our projects. Scenes and situations about which he had been enthusiastic in the evening often struck him in the morning as spiritless and dull. If he had been left to himself he would have put away the work half finished.

The stealing of his plots for stage purposes in America continued to annoy him, and that his friends there did their best to look after his interests is shown by this letter:—

"NEW YORK HOTEL, NEW YORK,
"*January* 22, 1884.

"MY DEAR HARTE,—Here is a short paragraph from the *Tribune* of this morning, and a stronger and longer one from a cent paper here.

"But I'm still so certain that you are being imposed upon in your absence from the country in this matter that I am impelled to again write to you, and I send you these clippings so that you may know what is going on. If the play is done *with* your permission let me know and it shall have better mention, as anything with your eminent name should have; and if not with your permission, but is stolen, let me know also, and I shall so inform our fellow-scribes.—Yours,

JOAQUIN MILLER."

But it was of no avail. Nothing could be done to stop the filchers of ideas, and the creator of them could only writhe under his wrongs. A particularly exasperating incident was a very badly done stage version of "Gabriel Conroy." The bandit adapter never said a word to the author about it, never offered him a cent of the profits of the production.

Fancy his anger when he read this criticism of his most ambitious and, I think, his favourite story:—

"GABRIEL CONROY.

"Mr. and Mrs. Kee Rankin produced their (*sic!*) new play 'Gabriel Conroy,' at the Third Avenue Theatre last night. As is generally known this play is an adaptation of Bret Harte's story of the same title, and the thread of narrative is the same in both. The adaptation, we believe, is the work of Mr. W. S. Andrews, although the author is not indicated by the programmes, and there is a strong probability that Mr. Rankin himself did a great deal of the work. The play is in a Prologue and four Acts, the former being entirely superfluous and highly ridiculous. The chief fault to be found with the work is that it lacks dramatic purpose and dramatic action. It is a pretty little story, but the climaxes are few and the incidents are amusing rather than stirring. There is little motive for the action, and the opportunities for strong acting are few."

This was pretty reading for an author who knew that his book was full of strong dramatic situations, firmly drawn, well-knit characters, and everything needed for stage effect. He had intended to adapt it for the theatre himself, and now that dream had to be banished. His title had been used, and his plot described as amusing rather than stirring—"a pretty little story," lacking dramatic purpose and dramatic action. No wonder he was angry, and, what was far worse, deeply mortified. But there was nothing to do but to bear it, and pray for the days when authors' rights will be properly protected.

In the early days of 1895 I read, in the pages of the *Pall Mall Magazine*, his story, "The Judgment of Bolinas Plain." Seeing in it great dramatic possibilities, I asked him if he would permit me to adapt it to the stage. He readily assented, but, at the same time, said that he thought I was mistaken in my view of his work and that my hours would be wasted. When I sent him my scenario, however, he at once saw how his slender story, by the introduction of other characters, and the putting into action of things only hinted at or suggested in the narrative, might be made into a three-act play. Indeed he was so delighted that he expressed a wish to write it with me. To this, of course, I more than readily agreed, and many happy days were spent over the composition and completion of "Sue."

It was accepted by Mr. Charles Frohman, and presented by him in New York on September 15, 1896. Neither of us could be there, and on the eve of the production of the play Bret Harte grew very anxious as to its fate. On the following day I was able to reassure him with a comforting cablegram from the management which ran as follows: "Well received. Fine acting. Press praises." Having exhausted her time in New York, "Sue" was taken on a prolonged tour throughout the States; and everywhere Miss Annie Russell made a triumph as Bret Harte's tenderly drawn little heroine of Bolinas Plain.

On June 10, 1898, Mr. Frohman produced the play at the Garrick Theatre, London. On that occasion Bret Harte and I were present, and it was pleasant to witness his delight in the perfect way in which, by one and all concerned in it, the piece was acted, and how every line seemed to go home to the hearts of a crowded and distinguished audience. Its artistic success in its English home was immediately secured, and Miss Annie Russell by the force, humour, and pathos of her acting moved the house in no ordinary way. The subsequent judgment of the critics was as gratifying to her as it was to the writers of the play. How much they owed to her charming personality, and her deft handling of a difficult part they freely and gratefully acknowledged.

During the many pleasant hours of our collaboration I had ample opportunity for studying his working methods. Infinite painstaking, I soon learned, was the essence of his system. Of altering and realtering he was never tired, and though, as I have hinted, it was sometimes a little disappointing to find that what we had considered as finished over-night had, at his desire, to be reconsidered in the morning, the humorous way in which he would point out how serious situations might, by a twist of the pen, or by incompetent acting, create derisive laughter, compensated for double or even treble work. That was my difficulty. He liked, as he had reason to like, his own pathetic story. He was anxious to see it on the stage; but as the scenes and acts grew he would insist on pointing out to me how the most striking incidents in them might be burlesqued. No one realised more keenly than he did that to most things there is a comic as well as a serious side, and it seemed to make him vastly happy to put his finger on his own vulnerable spots.

Here is a case in point. There was the usual difficulty in finding a title for the play that would be both new and descriptive. In it poor Sue, a girlish wife, is seen to be so misunderstood and neglected by her unkempt and selfish husband, Ira, that she is tempted to leave him for the sake of a dazzling, light o' love acrobat. When the unhappy Ira recovers from his first fit of wild jealousy and anger, and realises what he has lost, he is willing to take her to his reawakened heart, and, pure as when she left him, his stray dove flutters home. It is a tender little story, and I was most anxious to find the right name for it in its elaborated stage form. A hundred suggestions were made and discarded, and I was growing quite worried about it. I suppose he noticed this, and wishing to make me laugh, he wrote :—

"MY DEAR PEMBERTON,—Eureka! The right title for the play is "*Dies Irae*; or, Susan's Sunday Out." It's appropriate, and, as far as I know, has not been used before. But I trust to you to search the records.—Ever yours, BRET HARTE."

This was facetious, but unsatisfactory; and then we boiled down our titles to the simple word, "Sue."

IN AND ABOUT STAGELAND

The morning after the production of "Sue" at the Garrick Theatre I went early to his rooms at 74 Lancaster Gate, and there found him at his solitary breakfast. But there was a pleased look upon his face. He was surrounded by the morning papers, and handing me *The Daily Telegraph* he said: "Read what Clement Scott has written." They were certainly words to rejoice his heart.

"At last," said the critic, "we have dragged Bret Harte on to the stage, and to judge by the enthusiasm, the breathless interest and the copious tears shed over dear, delightful, womanly 'Sue,' the English public does not intend to part with the brilliant talent of this essentially dramatic writer. He must write more plays—he could not write a better one than 'Sue'—and, if we mistake not, Mr. Edgar Pemberton will be at his elbow to-day urging him to turn the wealth of his dramatic material to account, and to make stage fortunes out of some of the best short stories ever written, in recent years. We have always maintained that Bret Harte is a born dramatist. He possesses every gift for the art which he so strangely and unaccountably neglected. . . . No man ever lived during the last half century who has a keener scent for all that is dramatic and all that is beautiful in life; no prose writer has better understood the rough, imperial justice of the miner and explorer; no novelist has better expressed the beauty of woman's nature; no artist has so impressed us with the dash of the brush, with a sketch, with an inspiration. We say to ourselves: 'Why was not Thackeray a dramatist?' There were reasons. He was analytical and philosophical. 'Why was not Charles Dickens a dramatist?' Because he was too rich in dramatic suggestion and comic material. But there was no reason on earth why Bret Harte should not be a dramatist, or why this writer of short stories, direct, human, poetic, and fanciful, should not have been the most successful playwright in his time. The dramatic gift, the poetic gift, the realistic gift are seldom combined. But Bret Harte possesses them all. If any one wants a proof of this let him see 'Sue' as acted yesterday. Alter the cast and the dramatic poet may suffer. But play it as it was played yesterday, and all London will flock to see it, because it is new, because it is original, and because every line and beat of this simple romance rings true to nature. . . . For years past the stage has not seen so realistic a play as 'Sue'—in its first act, its second act, and its Judge Lynch trial scene—and yet the audience depart happy, contented, delighted, better for what they have seen."

Thus encouraged we set to work again. He gave me as much time as he could spare from the incessant commissions for his stories, and in happy comradeship we wrote several other plays. These have yet to face the footlights. For one of them, a comedy in the possession of Mr. Arthur Bourchier, poor Bret Harte, only a short time before his death, approved of the scene sketches and models that had been prepared under his supervision, and which await its production.

Madame Van de Velde also adapted his stories to the stage—notably a very pretty version of "A Blue Grass Penelope," which she entitled "A Frontier Penelope." This was wise, as few English people know that "Blue Grass" signifies the region of Blue Grass Meadow in Kentucky, famous for its grazing.

A good many years ago, my friend, J. L. Toole, told me with manifest delight, that Bret Harte was writing a comedy for him, and said how proud he should be of association with his name. All promised well, and the piece (it was called "Furnished by Bunter") was written. It had an admirable leading idea, and contained an excellent part for the popular comedian, but as a whole it did not satisfy its fastidious author, and it was put on one side. Bret Harte and Toole were great friends. The following anecdote has been told before, but without it this chapter would not be complete.

Thus the actor, who dearly loves an innocent practical joke, relates it:—

"I had a curious experience in connection with St. Albans. I went there with a friend to spend an hour or two. Going into a tobacconist's to treat my friend to a cigar—I don't smoke myself—I asked for the cigars the Duke of St. Albans smoked. We went into other shops, and all the time asked for the same kind of goods they supplied to the Duke.

"'Lor' bless you,' they all said, 'the Duke doesn't deal here; we never see the Duke.' Then we urged our expectation, our notion that the Duke lived here and made a point of dealing with the local tradesmen. We got a good deal of harmless fun out of this, and next day I went to lunch with Bret Harte. After a greeting from my host, he said 'Let me introduce you to the Duke of St. Albans.' 'Oh yes,' I said, with a smile, and shook hands with the gentleman who was assuming that character, as I thought. Of course, I imagined my friend had told Bret Harte about our trip to St. Albans, and the American humorist was having his little joke now at my expense. Then he introduced me to Sir George Trevelyan; and I had hardly shaken hands with that gentleman when my host said, 'I would like to introduce you to Count Bismarck.' 'Oh yes,' I said, bowing to the newcomer, 'how many more of you are there? Where is Von Moltke, for instance?' Bret Harte laughed, so did Trevelyan; a comedian is allowed certain privileges, and my remark was considered, I daresay, more or less complimentary; but I had no idea what a fool I was making of myself. At luncheon I said to the man who sat next me, 'Who is the gentleman Harte introduced me to as St. Albans?' 'The Duke of St. Albans,' he replied. 'And the man opposite?' 'Herbert Bismarck—the Prince's son.' 'No!' I said, 'really?' 'Oh yes,' he said. 'And the man talking to him?' 'That is Sir George Trevelyan.' I never was more sold in my life. Bret Harte had heard nothing of my trip to St. Albans. The explanation of my reception of the names of his distinguished guests, however, was a success, for I felt bound to tell his Grace and the rest why I had treated them with levity, not to say contumely."

Poor Toole! The memory of his fiasco evidently more or less haunted him, for later he wrote:—

"TOOLE'S THEATRE, *July* 2, '84.

"MY DEAR BRET HARTE,—With much pleasure I enclose box and four stalls for our mutual friends.—With kind regards, your friend, J. L. TOOLE.

"*P.S.*—Come round at the end of 'The Pretty Horsebreaker' and refresh. I dreamt about Bismarck the other night!!!"

Of course the essence of this note lies in the concluding words of its postscript.

Bret Harte was a great admirer of the Gilbert-Sullivan operas, and as long ago as the first production of "H.M.S. *Pinafore*," he told me that he should communicate with the composer with a view to providing him with a libretto. The matter drifted until the January of 1883 when a plot was submitted.

"I have just returned from Paris," wrote Sir Arthur Sullivan. "Thanks for sending me your story, which I shall read to-night over the fire with a good cigar—complete enjoyment."

But as will be seen this was another of the theatrical projects destined to fall to the ground.

"*Feb.* 2, 1884.

"1 QUEEN'S MANSIONS, VICTORIA STREET, S.W.

"DEAR MR. BRET HARTE,—You will, I am sure, believe that the delay in writing to you has not been intentional on my part. Since my illness I have had enough to do in picking up the dropped threads of work and correspondence, so that I could give little or no time to pleasant things. The scenario I return now, as I am going away for a little rest and change, and I should like to tell you that I am struck with the ingenuity you have displayed in making so much that is interesting out of such slight material. In the hands of a good musician much might be done with it, although I doubt whether there is enough in it for *three* Acts. I think (this is of course only my own personal opinion) that it might with advantage be compressed into two with a change of scene in one of them if necessary, since once the idea is taken hold of the interest is difficult to sustain.

"With regard to myself, I have come to the decision of not writing any more comic operas for some time to come, for I have resolved to devote myself now, if not entirely, at least in a great measure, to more earnest work.

"I have rather come to the end of my tether in that line, and do not feel the same interest in writing that class of work that I did. There are younger men rising to whom I would gladly give the chance of gaining success in that field, and if I did yield to persuasion and write another, I should feel bound not to sever myself from my collaborateur, Gilbert.

"You will therefore see the reason why *I* cannot set it to music. Did you know, by the way, that a piece called 'Dr. Ox' on the same subject was produced at the Folly Theatre (now Toole's) some three or four years ago? Violet Cameron played in it. I did not see it, but I to-day recollected the fact, and thought I would mention it to you. I like your niece, Miss Griswold, very much. She is a bright, clever girl, and will, I hope, take a high position in England.—Yours very sincerely,

ARTHUR SULLIVAN."

At that time Bret Harte was very interested in the musical career of his talented niece, and did everything in his power to promote its success.

Gilbert and Sullivan must have been running very strongly in his mind when he wrote the following letter to one of his most intimate friends—Colonel Collins.

"TO COLONEL COLLINS.

"74 LANCASTER GATE, W., *Tuesday*.

"DEAR ARTHUR,—I may have to go out of town on Friday, but I'll let you know to-morrow. You really ought to see your doctor about those 'functional' derangements!

"Meantime, thanks for the address of Smith, the author of a 'Wine full of Vinosity.' I think it awfully pretty, though I don't understand it, and it may not be good for a 'shady drink.' I am continually asking myself, in a kind of Gilbertian patter!—

'Is wine *without* "vinosity"
Like speed without velocity?
Or talk without verbosity?
Or rage without ferocity?
Or corns without callosity?
Or,—simply some atrocity
Producing obesity—
This wine full of "vinosity"?

Chorus:—
'Then, with some curiosity
But *no* impetuosity,
We'll sing with great jocosity,
This wine full of vinosity!'

Yours always, BRET HARTE."

He was ever an appreciative theatre goer, and on such occasions he loved to have Colonel Collins for his comrade. He always wanted sympathy, and in him he had a friend who understood him. Here is the sort of letter he would dash off when he found himself in possession of a free evening:—

"TO COLONEL COLLINS.

"74 LANCASTER GATE, W.
"*15th December* 1898.

"DEAR ARTHUR,—Yes. Saturday 'suits' and looks auspicious. I have had the cook examine the

The writing desk at Camberley on which he often worked, and where he penned his last lines.

His library and writing table at 74, Lancaster Gate, London.

[To face p. 280.

entrails of a fowl, and find the omens propitious! Let it be Saturday, then.

"You will give me 'bread and pulse' at Brookes', and I will lead you to Arcadian stalls at the Alhambra or Empire. For heaven's sake let us go somewhere where we can laugh in the right place!

"I have not yet dared to face my Christmas shopping, but I'll pick up your offering at the Club and send you mine. It is so difficult to find something sufficiently idiotic and useless, to keep up our fond, foolish custom with.—Yours always,

BRET HARTE."

Another letter that Colonel Collins has most kindly placed at my disposal was dated from my home, when he was staying there and we were writing "Sue." The fact that he would not leave his work to take part in a gathering he would have enjoyed, shows how truly anxious he was to see his works properly placed on the stage.

"TO COLONEL COLLINS.

"PYE CORNER, BROADWAY, WORCESTERSHIRE,
"*June* 25, '95.

"MY DEAR ARTHUR,—What do you mean by having a Jubilee at a time when I can't attend? For I am afraid it will not be possible for me to get away from here (where I am visiting with a friend) before Monday next, much as I should enjoy meeting you with your friends, and gladly as I would throw over any *social* engagement for that purpose. But I am here on *business*, of which sometime I will tell you further.

"And what do you mean by flaunting your trifling 'coming of age' in the face of an old moustache of fifty-six like me? You and I are mere infants before this modern generation—who are born tired, are battered cynics at twenty, and doddering decadents at thirty; who don't understand the *youthful* exuberance of Dickens, any more than they do the mellowed wine of Thackeray, but get drunk on green unfermented literature and fancy they are inspired. Don't talk of growing old in this age of infant decrepitude.

"Why haven't I seen you? I sent over from the Club the other day to try and capture you at 24 St. James' Street, that you might lunch with me, but the manager brought back word that you would not return before the afternoon. Do let me hear from you. I was so sorry I could not come to Hare's dinner, but I had accepted an invitation from the Chappells for the following Sunday to meet him. In great haste, yours always, BRET HARTE."

But, though the Sullivan scheme was abandoned, the unwearying writer never lost his desire to become the author of the libretto of an operetta. At one time he took up his pretty romance, "At the Mission of San Carmel," and for it composed these hitherto unpublished lyrics. But he did not persevere with his scheme, and let the verses lie in his desk.

IN AND ABOUT STAGELAND

FATHER PEDRO.

From strand to sea and from sea to strand,
From sand to sedge and from reef to shingle,
Wherever the Angelus, tolled inland,
With the war of the surges meet and mingle,
Wherever these blessed bells are borne,
Far as the seagull lifts his pinion:
On dancing sea, or on sands forlorn—
That is the Holy Church dominion.

Wanderer, waif, or castaway,
Within the spell of that mystic blessing,
Whether on sea-shore, bight or bay,
Becomes a part of Her own possessing;
Thus we see in the most profound
Ecclesiastical opinion,
"Flotsam and jetsam" like this when found
Are all in the Holy Church dominion.

SONG.—LULLABY TO A CHILD.

When the Mission garden is sunk in shade,
And the pear-tree leaves hang still,
And the radiant sun, like our mystic Host
Is lowered beneath the hill;
When the stealthy fog through the sea-ward dell
Creeps in with the breath of the sea,
In my lonely cell—to the Angelus bell—
I have dreamed a dream of thee.

I have dreamed of a child that should lift my soul
With a spiritual father's care,
A child to train for the heavenly goal
With precept and maxim rare;
A child of my race—though none of kin
To this mortal flesh that I bear,—
That a parent's love—without mortal sin—
Might dwell with me everywhere.

As late as 1901 he completed "The Lord of Fontenelle" for the Hungarian composer M. Emmanuel Moör. This has yet to be heard, but I am, thanks to M. Moör's courtesy, permitted to publish these verses, which are set in a most ingenious and well-told story:—

DICK'S SONG.

Whether on the lone prairie where buffaloes roam,
In London, or Paris, or Berlin, I stray,
In the shade of St. Paul's or St. Peter's big dome,
I gallop and gallop and gallop away!
In the Roman arena my hoofprints are plain,
I have lassoed my horse on the banks of the Spree,
I have scalped the Sioux by the flow of the Seine,
As I gallop and buckjump and canter away!

In London my running was thought to be "stunning,"
In Paris the click of my spurs was "très chic,"
Though the skill girls admire, their lovers call "cunning,"
And term a mere "trick" the true courage of Dick;
So I've cut their palaver, and to take ship from Havre
I've galloped and galloped and galloped all day,
Till my horse on a boulder has just slipped his shoulder
And I—a pathfinder—have quite lost my way!

Dick had evidently been intimately associated with the displays of "Buffalo Bill."

THE LEGEND.

Long, long ago, throughout the park and wild wood,
Long, long ago!—ere you and I were born—
Here in the shade, our fathers in their childhood
Trembled to here Count Armand's fateful horn

Rising and falling
Through the woods and calling
Prayers for his soul in youthful folly lost,
Doomed here to range, in solitude recalling
That day of sacrilege his soul and body cost.

For on that day when good St. Hubert granted
Freedom from chase to every antlered beast,
Dead they had found him beside a stag that panted.
Still from that chase the Count has never ceased;
And for the breaking
Of that Saint's day-making
Chase of the beast the Church would that day spare
He is condemned to wander ever, waking
Woodland and dingle with their wild fanfare.

CHORUS.—THE ANGELUS CHANT.

Holy Angels in this hour,
When light fades and shadows lower
And the foul fiend holds his power,
Guard us with thy mystic spell!
Let thy soft far-reaching bell
With its charm surround our towers,
Banish sprites and blights of flowers!
And all ills that come to dwell;
Guard the House of Fontenelle.

SONG.

Oh thou, condemned by Fate
To wander desolate
Ever alone!
Know! thou art not forgot.
One heart that knows thee not
Would, for thy cruel lot
Thy sins atone.

Eyes that ne'er dwelt on thee
When thou wast bold and free,
Weep for thy misery,
Thy youth undone.
Knight of my fantasy!
In dreams I walk with thee,
In dreams I talk with thee,
My lonely one!

SONG.

When a maiden would not marry,
And the single fain would tarry
Though new suitors come and go,
'Tis not friends their plans miscarry,
'Tis not always the old Harry
Keeps her single! Ah! No! No!

When she's tearful, dull, or tragic,
Trace it not to sinful magic
That the Church can overthrow!
Mediæval necromancy
Never swayed a maiden's fancy
Like some young man! No! No! No!

SONG.

When a man knows his horse,
And is bold on the course
With a speed that you cannot come nigh to:
When he swings at your side
In a galloping stride,
Be sure he's the fellow to tie to.
You may gallop away all Life's sunny day
With just such a fellow to tie to.

With his seat like a rock
That no onset can shock,
He's the man when in trouble to fly to,
For when fate takes the bit
Still beside you he'll sit,
Where he'll ride, and he'll bide, and he'll die, too.

SONG.—TO LORD FONTENELLE'S PORTRAIT.

O! scion of an ancient race,
However high thy deeds and place
Thy gallant mien and knightly grace,
I envy not thy state.
I only grudge—more dear to me—
Her love that has ennobled thee
Above the stateliest degree
Of Prince or Potentate.

O soul accursed—whate'er thy doom—
Thy penance dark beyond the tomb,
I would with joy thy fate assume
For tears from her sweet eyes,
And trust that pure and holy rain
Would wash my dust of mortal stain,
And through her Paradise regain
And bless the sacrifice!

Man like myself—and lover bold,
If that dull canvas still doth hold
One drop of thy fierce blood of old,
That flowed in list and chase,
Step from thy frame in warlike grace
Do battle—as for Honour dear—
For her sweet sake—or take thou here
My gauntlet in thy face!

He liked to have his verses well set to music, but was particular with regard to the composer. He was especially delighted when Charles Gounod took a fancy to "The Mission Bells of Monterey," and wrote him from the continent, "Our bells are already ringing." His niece, Miss Griswold, undertook the exquisite poem, "What the Chimney Sang," the poem in which he unconsciously summed up his own character. In it he tells us how the half-sorrowful woman hated the wind in the chimney; how the trembling children feared the wind in the chimney; how the practical husband and father resolved to mend the hole in the chimney; and then comes the beautiful concluding verse:—

"Over the chimney the night-wind sang
And chanted a melody no one knew,
But the Poet listened and smiled for he
Was Man, and Woman, and Child, all three;
And said—'It is God's own harmony,
This wind we hear in the chimney.'"

Yes, in that Poet—the Man and Woman and Child, all three—Bret Harte was personified, and that is why those who really knew and understood him loved him.

Another composition that pleased him well was Mrs. T. Edgar Pemberton's accompaniment (which was undertaken at his wish) to his pretty "Hasta Mañana."

In a mirthful mood he dashed off for Mr. Leo Stern a capital semi-burlesque "nigger song." This is how it runs:—

IN AND ABOUT STAGELAND

UNCLE JUBA.

"Dar was a man in Florida, dey called him 'Uncle Ju,'
De doctor found him proof agin all fevers dat dey knew;
De cholera bacillus he would brush away like flies,
And yaller fever microbes he would simply jess despise.
For he was such a bery seasoned nigger
Froo and froo—all froo,
Just de acclimated, vaccinated figger
To do—to do.
When de sojer boys came marching, dey would shout,
'Lordy! Her's de man for Cuba—trot him out.
For even if he cannot pull a trigger
Just like you—like you,
He's a seasoned and an acclimated figure,
Dat will do—will do.'

De proudest man in Florida dat day was 'Uncle Ju,'
When dey marched him off to Cuba wid de odder boys in blue;
He had a brand new uniform, a red cross on his arm,
He said, 'Don't mind me, darkies, I can't come to any harm,
For de surgeon dat inspected of my figger
When on view—on view,
Sez I'm just de kind of acclimated nigger
Dat 'ud do—would do.
I can tackle yaller fever all de day,
I'm de only man for Cuba what can stay,
For agin de bery worst kind of malaria
Dat dey knew—dey knew,
I'm an iron-plated, sheathed and belted area
Froo and froo—all froo.'

Alas! for Ju. poor Uncle Ju, aldo dar was no doubt
Dey passed him froo as fever proof, one ting dey had left out;
For while he took his rations straight, and odders died like flies,
Along o' dat 'er Yaller Jack and deadly Cuban skies,

And though such a bery highly seasoned nigger
Froo and froo—all froo,
And an acclimated, vaccinated figure
Just like new—like new,
One day a Spanish gunner sent a shell
Which skooted dat poor darkie off to dwell
Where de fever would send any odder nigger
Like you—like you,
For it flattened out dat acclimated figger
Ob old Ju—poor Ju."

Good dramatic art of every class appealed to Bret Harte, but I think his favourite actor on the English stage was John Hare. His methods naturally appealed to him. The admirably finished Meissonier-like stage portraits of the comedian were not unlike the finely yet minutely etched-in pen-pictures of the author. They worked together in different branches of the same school. When some seven or eight years ago John Hare first visited America it fell to my lot to write a book concerning his career in England. Bret Harte was most anxious that his favourite should be appreciated by his countrymen, and to my pages voluntarily contributed this letter:—

"MY DEAR PEMBERTON,—If anything is to be written of John Hare introductory to his visit to America, I am delighted that it should fall to hands as appreciative and conscientious as yours, although it seems to me scarcely possible that so accomplished an artist as he should require any other introduction to my countrymen than the 'bill of the play' and the lifting of the curtain. For to see him act is to love him, and 'to love him is a liberal, theatrical education.' I know that America will be quick to recognise that, while he is in tradition and experience thoroughly an *English* actor, he expresses that finest quality of restraint so beloved of the Comédie Française, but which we don't always recognise in the highly emotional rôles it sends across the Channel to us. What I think is still more remarkable in Hare's acting is his complete abnegation of self in his characters, a quality so strong that it seems to heighten the efforts of those who support him; he is the *character*, and the others are capital *actors* who exist to *draw him out*. I don't believe that applause ever startles him from this singular and delightful concentration. I have seen him come before the curtain to receive his well-earned tribute with a slightly pained and deprecatory air, as one who should say, 'You really *mustn't* praise me for acting, you know; it's the other fellows. I am really Mr. So-and-so!' It is for this reason, *because* he has made the whole scene so delightful, and put everybody at their best, that one is apt to forget *him* in the perfection of his art, and one does not always yield him his full meed of applause.

"I am told that he takes with him to America a limited répertoire, and that it is likely to affect his popularity with the masses. I should not predicate that of a people who have made Jefferson immortal in one or two plays, and he is quite as fortunate in his 'Pair of Spectacles' as Jefferson was in his 'Rip Van Winkle.' What a wholesome breath is wafted over the footlights in Grundy's charming adaptation of that pretty French trifle! I do not believe that we, in America, are so familiar with the miasma of cynical doubt, or the firedamp of explosive sentimentalism, as to draw back in our stalls from so honest and revivifying an atmosphere. And how delightfully Hare, even with look and gesture, traces the unfailing optimism of the hero, through its momentary refraction and aberration into cynicism under the disturbing lens of the borrowed spectacles, to the perfectly natural and convincing climax! One such play, and one such character, should carry him far across the continent and far into the hearts of the American people, and I shall be much mistaken if they do not.

"I am not a critic—Heaven forfend! so I cannot approach his art properly equipped and consciously superior. But I should like to dwell on what seems to me to be his singularly crisp delivery, every word ringing out clearly, so that even in his wonderful rendering of an old man's utterance his mumble is never unintelligible, or his loquacity slurred or indistinct. His enunciation of emphasis is nearly perfect. I have a very vivid recollection of his delivery of the apology forced from Spencer Jermyn by his wife in the last act of Pinero's comedy, 'The Hobby Horse.' The language is very simple, as Pinero always is when he is most subtle—so simple I should hesitate to transcribe it, but Pinero knew that Hare could inform it with the very spirit of the irony he intended. So that it stands now with Hare's delivery as one of the most delightful and sarcastic *résumés* of the moral and sentimental situations of a play I ever witnessed.

"It seems to me also that so much could be said of his wonderfully minute study of the half senile character, where the habits and impulses of youth remain to override the actual performance. There is a notable instance of this in his wonderful portrayal of the Duke of St. Olpherts in 'The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith.' He is gallantly attempting to relieve Mrs. Thorpe of the tray she is carrying, but of course lacks the quickness, the alertness, and even the actual energy to do it, and so follows her with delightful simulation of assistance all over the stage, while she *carries it herself*, he pursuing the *form* and ignoring the performance. It is a wonderful study. And who does not remember Beau Farintosh in 'School,' and all that splendid forgetfulness of the, alas! all too necessary eyeglass?

"Do with this what you like, only don't make my arms seem to ache with reaching up to pat such a tall fellow as Hare on the head.—Yours always,

Bret Harte."

In this careful and pleasant fashion he would, in conversation, analyse the methods of all the actors and actresses he admired. He always declared that he was no critic, but he was in truth a very keen one, though a little prone to be severe on plays and players unsuited to his taste.

Even in things theatrical he was patriotic, and he held that, in his day, no English actor could be compared with his friend and countryman Edwin Booth. No doubt he was a very great as well as a very graceful actor, and concerning him Bret Harte could be enthusiastic.

When, in 1882, Booth acted in Glasgow the friends frequently met, and would have done so oftener but for the actor's gradually failing health.

This little letter speaks for itself.

"GRAND HOTEL, *Tuesday*.

"MY DEAR HARTE,—I will drop in to see you as soon as I can. I am prevented from doing so to-day as I intended. Before ten A.M. I am never *up*, and after four P.M. I am usually *down* for my nap, which I always require before acting. 'Darling, I am growing old!' I will try to see you sure to-morrow at the Consulate. I am afraid that I will not be able to accept your kind invitation to luncheon, but will have a pipe and a chat with you.

"I am in a hurry, as my girls (my daughter and her friend) are waiting for me to drive with them. Adieu.—Ever yours, EDWIN BOOTH."

Apart from his Shakespearean representations he especially loved to see Booth as Richelieu in Bulwer's play of that name. With William Winter he believed this impersonation alone would have made him eminent and famous, and he too perceived in him the image of an actor of great elemental power and of astonishing versatility.

CHAPTER VIII

LATER DAYS, LATER FRIENDS, AND LATER WORK

I HAVE already said something of the manner of Bret Harte's life in England. It was very simple, and, though he took a certain amount of relaxation, he was always working. But his work had to be done in his own minutely careful way, and he took more time and pains over it than most writers would do or most readers could imagine. The manuscripts that he preserved show the extreme care with which they were produced. When he had finished one story he at once began to think about the next. It might happen that for several days he would not write a line, but think constantly over a plot or an incident that might work up into a plot. He would even sit at his desk with his blank paper before him, and after the lapse of several hours get up and pace the room, or leave it, saying that he had an idea but had not so far been able to work it out. To such a literary friend as Madame Van de Velde he would often talk about that idea, asking, "Do you like that?" "Do you think it is good?" Once satisfied with his conception he began to write. The initial lines, consisting only of a few words, would often be repeated with slight alterations on many sheets of paper, and this apparently with rapidity, but in reality with considerable mental effort. Having satisfied himself with a beginning, the pages would be filled in with that close, neat handwriting which characterised both his manuscripts and his private correspondence. At the onset he did not always see the end of his story, and would say, "I don't know what the winding-up will be, but I do know what my characters are, and they will work their own conclusion."

He never wrote very much at a time—a thousand words a day was probably the limit—but no day passed without his adding something to the story when once it was well in hand. Hard to please, he did not write unless he felt his lines were good, and there were few corrections in his manuscripts, although he sometimes added or suppressed something in the proofs—most frequently when he felt his characteristic endings to be too abrupt. Completely absorbed though he was in composition, he never allowed himself to appear vexed by interruption, and would lay down his pen to answer any questions or to respond to any call.

During long mornings he would sit at his desk, pen in hand, and his eyes fixed on the story he was conjuring up. His extraordinary gift of observation—almost unconscious observation—and his wonderfully retentive and accurate memory served him well, and enabled him to see vividly the things he portrayed in his word pictures.

He thought much of the names of his characters, and promptly altered any Christian or surname that did not seem exactly right. And the titles of his stories were ever matters of considerable deliberation. With the longer novels, such as "Gabriel Conroy," "Maruja," "Susy," "Clarence," and "Cressy" it was plain sailing, but when it came to the volumes of collected stories much trouble was taken. Thus "Shore and Sedge," "Tales of the Pine and Cypress," "Buckeye and Chapparel," "Tales of Trail and Town," "Stories in Light and Shadow," "From Sand-Hill to Pine," and "On the Old Trail" (the last volume published during his lifetime), required an infinite amount of thinking out, and seemed to the author like a second baptism of his dream children.

It is well that those who are interested in the life of Bret Harte should know these things, because some censors would have us believe that his later stories were written in a hurry, and, as it were, "to order." Nothing could be more untrue. He took as much pains with his last tale as he did with "The Luck of Roaring Camp," and one and all are worth more careful reading than is given to literature in these days of frantic rush.

That the novelty of the thing should wear off was inevitable. He was the pioneer of the short story, and he had opened the way for countless and many reputable followers.

In his own article on "The Rise of the Short Story," he has said:—

"But while the American literary imagination was still under the influence of English tradition, an unexpected factor was developing to diminish its power. It was *humour*, of a quality as distinct and original as the country and civilisation in which it was developed. It was at first noticeable in the anecdote or 'story,' and, after the fashion of such beginnings, was orally transmitted. It was common in the bar-rooms, the gatherings in the 'country store,' and finally at public meetings in the mouths of 'stump orators.' Arguments were clinched and political principles illustrated by 'a funny story.' It invaded even the camp meeting and pulpit. It at last received the currency of the public press. But wherever met it was so distinctly original and novel, so individual and characteristic, that it was at once known and appreciated abroad as 'an American story.' Crude at first, it received a literary polish in the press, but its dominant quality remained. It was concise and condense, yet suggestive. It was delightfully extravagant, or a miracle of understatement. It voiced not only the dialect, but the habits of thought of a people or locality. It gave a new interest to slang. From a paragraph of a dozen lines it grew into half a column, but always retaining its conciseness and felicity of statement. It was a foe to prolixity of any kind; it admitted no fine writing nor affectation of style. It went directly to the point. It was burdened by no conscientiousness; it was often irreverent; it was devoid of all moral responsibility, but it was original! By degrees it developed character with its incident, often, in a few lines, gave a striking photograph of a community or a section, but always reached its conclusion without an unnecessary word. It became—and still exists as—an essential feature of newspaper literature. It was the parent of the American 'short story.'"

Accept these facts and it will be seen that in his mature years Bret Harte worked at a disadvantage. Even if the California of his early days had existed and he had lived among his old surroundings, he would not have frequented the bar-rooms, country stores, and camp meetings that had excited his youthful curiosity, and provided the material for his earlier work. He had either to invent the germ of his stories or to draw upon the store of his recollections. It was wonderful that the mine proved inexhaustible. Add to this the fact that he never "pushed himself." Having taught others how to play his own game, he encouraged rather than deprecated rivalry. Rightly it has been said of him that of all the writers of his time he was the most modest, the most unobtrusive, the most anxious to give honour where he believed honour to be due.

And yet on English soil he was able to create a character worthy to live with the immortal Colonel Starbottle and the ever fascinating Jack Hamlin. I allude to Enriquez, the loquacious young Californian of varied accomplishments, whose conversation is famous for a marvellous combination of Spanish precision and California slang. Let those who doubt this statement read "Chu Chu," "The Devotion of Enriquez," and that touching conception, "The Passing of Enriquez." Then let them ask themselves if Bret Harte's genius failed him in his later years.

If, during this long and laborious period, he, in common with many of us, had his deep personal disappointments and sorrows, he bore them with the chivalry of a Bayard and a silence as dignified as it was pathetic. To a man of his sensitive nature the barbed shafts of "envy and calumny, and hate and pain," lacerated with a cruelty that at times must have seemed unendurable. Under such torments he often writhed, but he suffered all things with a quiet patience that afforded a glorious example to those friends who, knowing of his wounds, had to be silent concerning them, and could offer him no balm. While he was in Scotland he came across, and was much impressed with, the motto of the Earls Mareschal of Aberdeen, "*They say! What say they? Let them say!*" When, as he was fond of doing, he quoted these words with a quiet scorn that seemed to give colour to them, it was easy to see how and why they moved him.

His recreations consisted chiefly in visits to the country and the homes of his friends. His knowledge of England was marvellous. He was familiar with and knew the history of every cathedral, abbey church, and historic ruin in the land. In Scotland he made a pilgrimage to all the spots associated with Macbeth; in Yorkshire he sought out Charlotte

Brontë's home, for though he did satirise her in his condensed novel "Miss Mix," he had true admiration for her genius. In such things as these he took the deepest interest, and I need hardly say he was often in Stratford-on-Avon, and had explored all the beautiful Warwickshire Shakespeare-land.

One of his greatest pleasures in this way was his visit to Mr. and Mrs. Webb at Newstead Abbey, Nottingham. There he fairly revelled in memories of his beloved Byron. He was not a collector of things, but of this holiday he brought back and cherished several souvenirs. They are before me now: dried leaves picked by him from the oak-tree that Byron planted; a sprig of olive-green box from the hedge near "Boatswain's" tomb, with a memorandum in his neat handwriting: "There is a picture of 'Boatswain'—a good-humoured but not a very large 'Newfoundland'—in the West Gallery;" and many photographs all duly labelled. On the back of one of them he records an excursion to a country he always longed to see, for, from his boyhood, he was fascinated with the legends of Robin Hood, Friar Tuck, and the Merry Men who were their happy-go-lucky comrades. "'The Major Oak.' Ninety feet in diameter at roots. A famous tree in Sherwood Forest. I kept it as a memento of a luncheon party in the 'merry greenwood,' and not for its beauty or majesty, for there were smaller trees finer, and the forest as a whole was superb."

Another historic house in which he was often the welcome guest of his friend Lord Compton (now the Marquis of Northampton) was Compton Wynyates in Warwickshire, a place that has been in the family of the Comptons since the time of King John. Apart from the keen pleasure he always felt in the companionship of Lord Compton, he loved to gaze upon the fine old house with its famous chimneys all worked in spires and zigzags, and to muse over the far away lore in which the whole place is enveloped. Then when he visited Castle Ashby, Northamptonshire, the principal residence of the family, he would ponder over the portraits of the Northamptons and Comptons of the "brave days of old," and conjure up pictures of that fierce fight at Edge Hill, hard by Compton Wynyates, between Royalists and Roundheads. Such things as these had continual charm for him, and as he was everywhere a welcome guest he studied the "Stately Homes of England" to the best advantage. As usual his surroundings had their influence on his work. In more than one of his stories we get glimpses of these experiences, and in "The Desborough Connections" his description of Scrooby Manor shows clearly the impression they made upon him. "It was a historic house, and had always struck him" (the American Consul) "as being, even in that country of historic seats, a singular example of the vicissitudes of English manorial estates and the mutations of its lords. His host in his prime had been recalled from foreign service to unexpectedly succeed to an uncle's title and estate.

That estate, however, had come into possession of the uncle only through his marriage with the daughter of an old family whose portraits still look down from the walls upon the youngest and alien branch. There were likenesses, effigies, memorials, and reminiscences of still older families who had occupied it through forfeiture by war or the favouritism of kings, and in its stately cloisters and ruined chapel was still felt the dead-hand of its evicted religious founders, which could not be shaken off."

At Crewe Hall he was the guest of the Earl of Crewe, and he particularly valued a copy of Jane Austen's "Emma," in which, before giving it to him, his host had written these lines:—

"Beneath our grey unlovely skies
  She wielded once her dainty pen,
With tolerant smile and wistful eyes,
  Calm critic of the mind of men.

Brave wizard of the breezier west,
  Though life be short, yet art endures,
Shadow or sun, we love the best
  That art can give us, hers or 'yours.'"—CREWE.

He was rather fond of poking fun at the use made by the English of coats-of-arms and crests. "I can't see what good they are to you," he would say as he glanced at a book-plate, or handled table silver on which a crest was displayed. Once he said to me, "I suppose that pony of yours would be deeply hurt if you removed that meaningless emblem from his harness, and after all you do quite right to make the pony happy." And yet he took the greatest interest in such matters, and was far better versed in heraldry than most Englishmen.

To the distinguished host of one of the country mansions in which he had been a guest, he wrote the following postscript to a letter :—

"*P.S.*—The double crest on your notepaper has always troubled me. I have, after a sleepless night, finally come to the following pleasing and instructive solution of it. I copyright this idea for your benefit.

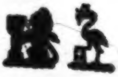
ÆSOP'S

HERALDIC FABLES.

Edited by Sir Bernard Burke.

The Sejant Lion and the Proper Stork.

"A Sejant Lion once called upon a Proper Stork. 'Pray be seated,' said the Stork, politely, offering him one of the fashionable low chairs now so much in vogue.



But the Sejant Lion, instead of accepting, rushed to a music stool, and began to rapidly screw it up to a proper height for his use.

"'Why,' said the Stork, *regardant*, 'are you like a newly elected member?'

"'I am not an Irish Secretary,' responded the Lion with dignity, 'to answer ill-timed questions—but why am I?'

"'Because,' said the Stork, 'you expect to be elevated by your seat.'

"The Lion remained for an instant 'at gaze,' then became 'salient,' and finally 'rampant.' Countering with his 'dexter' paw, he caught the Stork heavily with a slogging blow on the 'crest' and 'inflamed' his eye. However, the appearance of a 'party per pale' 'helmetted' with a 'chevron' (Seinant of Irish Constabulary) on the scene, put an end to the encounter.

"*Moral.*

"This Fable teaches us that a Sejant Lion can Git Along with Less Stork than any other Dumb Animal. BRET HARTE."

But while he mixed in the highest circles of English society, and took deep and sympathetic interest in all he saw and heard, he never forgot America or his American principles. If with comparative strangers he was reticent, he quickly let his intimate friends know which, according to his views, was the better organised country of the two. How often I have heard him laugh heartily at our patient tolerance of things which he called monstrous! Nor did he forget his American friends. One of these was William Francis Bartlett, scholar, soldier, and a gentleman: a man who had a fascination for Bret

Harte, as he realised so closely his rather exacting ideal of a hero. Maimed and shattered in health his friend returned from his terrible experiences and gallant deeds in the fierce fight between the North and South, yet, according to Bret Harte, he was "still the gentle scholar; still the modest gentleman." When this loved comrade died he took infinite pains over these verses concerning him. They appeared in *Scribner's Magazine*, but strangely enough were not included in his collected works:—

"O poor Romancer—thou whose printed page,
Filled with rude speech and ruder forms of strife,
Was given to heroes in whose vulgar rage
No trace appears of gentler ways and life!—

Thou, who wast wont of commoner clay to build
Some rough Achilles or some Ajax tall;
Thou, whose free brush too oft was wont to gild
Some single virtue till it dazzled all;—

What right hast thou beside this laurelled bier
Whereon all manhood lies—whereon the wreath
Of Harvard rests, the civic crown, and here
The starry flag, and sword and jewelled sheath?

Seest thou these hatchments? Knowest thou this blood
Nourished the heroes of Colonial days;—
Sent to the dim and savage-haunted wood
Those sad-eyed Puritans with hymns of praise?

Look round thee! Everywhere is classic ground.
There Greylock rears. Beside yon silver 'Bowl'
Great Hawthorne dwelt, and in its mirror found
Those quaint, strange shapes that filled his poet's soul.

Still silent, Stranger? Thou, who now and then
  Touched the too credulous ear with pathos, canst not speak?
Hast lost thy ready skill of tongue and pen?
  What, Jester! Tears upon that painted cheek?

Pardon, good friends! I am not here to mar
  His laurelled wreaths with this poor tinselled crown,—
This man who taught me how 'twas better far
  To be a poem than to write it down.

I bring no lesson. Well have others preached
  This sword that dealt full many a gallant blow;
I come once more to touch the hand that reached
  Its knightly gauntlet to the vanquished foe.

O pale Aristocrat, that liest there,
  So cold, so silent! Couldst thou not in grace
Have borne with us still longer, and so spare
  The scorn we see in that proud, placid face?

'Hail and farewell!' So the proud Roman cried
  O'er his dead hero. 'Hail,' but not 'farewell.'
With each high thought thou walkest side by side;
  We feel thee, touch thee, know who wrought the spell!"

Another valued American friend was Clarence King, the eminent geologist. In sending him one of his publications, Bret Harte inscribed it :—

"To Clarence King, author of 'Geology of the Fortieth Parallel,' and other works of fiction."

Here is another old and long-forgotten stanza of his that must be reproduced :—

AND LATER WORK

LINES IN AN ALBUM

(From the "Californian")

"Sweet Mary, maid of San Andreas,
  Upon her natal day,
Procured an album, double gilt,
  Entitled 'The Bouquet.'

But what its purpose was, beyond
  Its name, she could not guess;
And so between its gilded leaves
  The flower he gave she'd press.

Yet blame her not, poetic youth,
  Nor deem too great the wrong;
She knew not Hawthorne's bloom, nor loved
  Macaulay's flowers of song.

Her hymn book was the total sum
  Of her poetic lore;
And having read through Dr. Watts,
  She did not ask for Moore.

But when she ope'd her book again,
  How great was her surprise
To find the leaves on either side,
  Stained deep with crimson dyes.

And that fair rose, his latest gift,
  A shapeless form she views;
Its fragrance sped, its beauty fled,
  And vanished all its dews.

Oh, Mary, maid of San Andreas,
  Too sad was your mistake;
Yet one, methinks, that wiser folks
  Are very apt to make.

LATER DAYS, LATER FRIENDS

Who 'twixt these leaves would fix the shapes
That Love and Truth assume,
Will find they keep, like Mary's rose,
The stain and not the bloom."

Busy as he always was with his literary work, it is wonderful how he found time for his voluminous correspondence. But it was always his custom to reply promptly to each letter he received, and it is certain he took as much pains with every note he signed as if it had been an important magazine article. I think he found more time for this after he had put all his business arrangements into the good hands of Mr. A. P. Watt. This was an immense source of comfort to him, and he never ceased to speak gratefully of the care and tact with which his affairs were managed. Here is proof of it:—

"*December* 24, 1888.

"DEAR MR. WATT,—Would you mind attaching to your watch-chain the accompanying 'edition' of one of my earlier works, lately republished at Vienna? It would be a pleasant recognition of my Christmas wishes for your welfare, and of the gratitude of an author you have served so faithfully.—Yours always,

BRET HARTE."

This reminds me to say that his stories were ever in request on the continent. A great number of them were translated into French (and some into German) by Madame Van de Velde—and at least one of them, "A Drift of Red Wood Camp," was written for publication in a notable Parisian periodical *Les Lettres et les Arts.* There, under Madame Van de Velde's title, *Une Epave de Bois Rouge*, it appeared some time before it appealed to sympathetic English and American readers.

I am happily enabled to introduce more evidence of his strong appreciation of Mr. Watt's ever-ready and efficient help:—

"CHRISTMAS DAY, 1892.

"DEAR MR. WATT, — Many thanks for your pretty match-box of tortoiseshell — which is 'real turtle' in its quality! It is another of the pleasant mementoes of you that throng my desk as I write and keep in mind the *friend* as well as the *business adviser.* With best wishes and greetings of the season,—Yours always, BRET HARTE."

In this interesting letter he refers to the life-like portrait by John Pettie, R.A., for which he sat in 1885:—

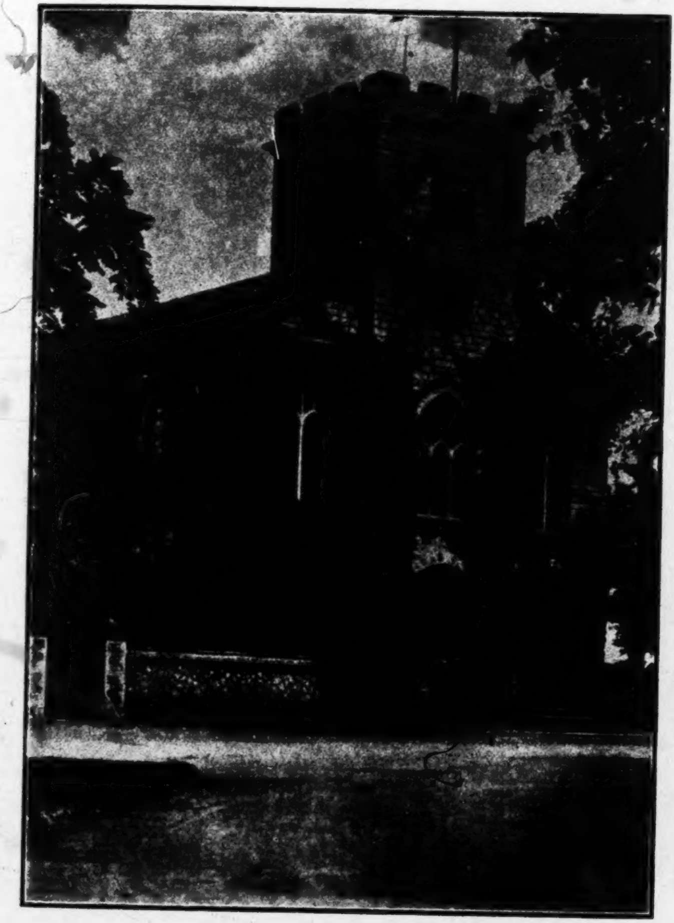
"*March* 6, 1893.

"MY DEAR WATT,—I thoroughly sympathise with your loving appreciation of John Pettie. I was very thankful to sit to him, and still more thankful that during that pleasant process he *sat to me* much more unconsciously—as a delightful study of a strong, simple, wholesome, artistic nature. I am afraid I bothered him a good deal with unaccommodating features and evasive expression; I felt a little criminal at times; though I thoroughly enjoyed—as a brother artist in another line—his frank impatience and half-humorous rages when he had any difficulty in realising his high ideals in the subject before him. But he was always good-humoured and infinitely painstaking. And I count the hours I spent in the studio in Fitz-John's Avenue among my pleasantest memories.

Even then I should have had more than my due if his kindness had ended with the sittings, the placing of the portrait in the Royal Academy and its later exhibition in Berlin. But I was greatly astonished, and I think very honestly touched, when the picture, handsomely framed, came to me on the following Christmas, as a free gift, with a few lines from his generous hand. It was a characteristic extravagance — the unthinking largesse of a true artist—but I cannot look up at its masterful workmanship now without feeling the presence of its talented and generous creator quite as often as my own.—Yours always, BRET HARTE."

"BUCKENHAM HALL, MUNDFORD, NORFOLK,
"*September* 12, 1897.

"MY DEAR MR. WATT,—How can I thank you sufficiently for your charming present of the stick! It came to me just as I had finished my summer work on the Christmas story which I owe to your contract, and I accept it in its most pleasant significance. I cannot hope that it will 'prop up'



Frimley Church.

[*To face p.* 312.

any weak passages in *my* work, but it will always remind me of your invaluable assistance as a practical staff to—Yours always, BRET HARTE."

"74 LANCASTER GATE, W.,
"*December* 23, 1897.

"MY DEAR MR. WATT,—I am going to Caversham, to my son's, for Christmas, and this must excuse my somewhat premature greetings for the season.

"I hope you will try to make a place on your desk for my two little—(and *too* little)—silver gifts. My countrymen have discovered a way of transmuting silver to gold, I understand; and I expect that in the course of time these trifles will greatly appreciate in value! (I have great hopes of that handsome silver cigar-case you once gave me!) But whether they do or not, I have greater faith in the touchstone of an old friendship transmuting these little Christmas exchanges of ours into something that every year we hold of higher value.

"With sincere wishes for your Christmas cheer, and prosperity in the New Year, — Believe me, dear Mr. Watt, always yours,

BRET HARTE."

Bret Harte thought much of the Christmas season, and to the last kept up the "fond and foolish" custom of sending generous presents to his friends, and these were always accompanied by humorous letters. In despatching to me a piece of furniture for my rather overcrowded library, he wrote :—

"My dear Pemberton, — This must go into that room of yours—even if you go out! Yours affectionately, Bret Harte."

"74 Lancaster Gate, W.,
"*July* 1, 1898.

"Dear Mr. Watt,—It was very kind of you to send me your congratulations respecting 'Sue,' as I had no idea you took any interest in such things—or I might have been tempted to send you tickets for the matinée performance two weeks ago, at the risk of boring you! However, I trust that the flattering reception which has been given to it will ensure its financial success—which perhaps is my only excuse for diverging from my beaten path of pure romance-writing, in which you have always been as a welcome staff to my hand. Let us hope that 'Sue' may offer a little rest and recreation for us both, at the wayside. Yours always,
Bret Harte."

The next letter is characteristic of him and his kindly ways. On one of his visits to me he took an amused interest in certain collections of things—animal, vegetable, and mineral—which my young folk had accumulated and called their "museum."

On his return to London he took the trouble to buy from toy shops some weird-looking artificial concoctions, and sent them to be added to the "curiosity department":—

"74 Lancaster Gate, W.,
"*July* 3, 1895.

"My dear Mrs. Pemberton,—I am sending you a particularly hideous Japanese 'hat-rack,' against that halcyon day when I might again 'hang up my hat' in your Worcestershire halls on some future visit. It is, however, a real novelty, though I don't know whether it isn't better fitted for the 'museum' than the hall. But it can go in a 'dark corner,' and frighten 'Phenyl' when that small dog is naughty.

"The other things are for the girls' 'museum,' in which I took such a scientific interest. The skeleton is of 'George Washington when a child,' recovered at great expense from the ancestral vaults of that little church in Worcestershire, whose name I have forgotten, and you will kindly see that it is labelled as such. Attention may be called to the singular disproportion of the skull and the rest of the bony structure, showing the extraordinary cerebral development of the great American, even at *that* early age. The skeleton was undoubtedly taken at the great 'cherry tree' epoch of his history, and a glance at the frontal angles of the head will show the impossibility of his 'telling a lie,' or, indeed, anything else, at that time. So the skeleton thus conveys that moral which should underlie all scientific facts, and is especially suited for 'Museums' for the Young Person.

"The entomological specimens consist of 'Spottybugiana,' a singular Japanese variety, and the Sky Terrier Spider, which is supposed to have been the one which 'frightened Miss Muffet away.' Examination of its abdominal structure shows it to have lived exclusively upon 'curds and whey,' collected entirely from children. These specimens are singularly rare and unique, and are forwarded with the writer's compliments to Madge.

"I am trying to get you 'By Killarney's Rocks and Rills' (or words to that effect), and will duly send it. I know there was something else I promised, and I am sounding the dim, perilous depths of my memory for it. Perhaps, like Browning's Evelyn Hope, 'I shall wake, and remember, and understand,' some time. With kindest remembrances to all your household,—Yours always sincerely,

BRET HARTE."

In 1895 he went to Switzerland. He thoroughly enjoyed his holiday, and often talked of repeating it, but, as will be seen from this note, he would not have the land of the Alps compared to his glorious California:—

"HOTEL BYRNE, VILLENEUVE, SWITZERLAND.

"MY DEAR PEMBERTON,—Just a line to say that the scenario of the second act arrived safely. I have only glanced over it, and it seems quite right, but

I shall go over it more carefully in a day or two and write you then.

"The weather here is lovely—almost *too* lovely and luxurious to be bracing; the views beautiful—almost too beautiful, for the terraced lake from Villeneuve on to Territet, Montreux, and Vevey, with the river and mountain background, are so unconsciously like a picture, and nothing else, that you doubt it all. So to 'brace' myself and realise I went up to Geneva by the 'lift' railway, and thence to Caux, and thence to the Rochet, about 6000 feet, and came back to dinner, but not 'braced,' and not entirely convinced either.—Yours always,

BRET HARTE.

"*P.S.*—I wouldn't give a mile of the dear old honest virgin Sierras for 10,000 kilometres of all Switzerland!"

He used to say afterwards that much as he revelled in the Swiss air and sunshine the scenery always reminded him of theatrical act-drops, and that it was all so artistically composed that he could not believe in it. All the ballet backgrounds, he declared, you have ever seen in the theatre, exist there *in reality;* the views are pictures hanging on a wall, not views at all.

To his valued friend Miss Chappell he wrote many diverting letters, and some of them she very kindly permits me to reproduce:—

"74 Lancaster Gate, W.,
"*June* 8, 1896.

"Dear Miss Chappell,—I find, on referring to your note, I promised that the momentous question you asked me was 'the difference between a motor carriage and a man who beats his wife?' I don't know the answer, and I don't think I ever did. Roughly speaking, however, I should say that it was that the motor carriage has got rid of its *brute*, but the poor woman hasn't got rid of *hers!* But that is too obvious to be the real answer. I give it up. Ask me another.

"I haven't read Fitzgerald's poem yet, but I will presently, and will then restore it, in its pretty cover, to its fair owner.—Yours always, Bret Harte.

"*P.S.*—I used to know some cheerful, light-hearted Californian conundrums, but as they were quickly solved, and the answers added greatly to the mortality of the district, I am afraid they are not suited to this effete civilisation. B. H."

"To Miss Chappell.

"Arford House, Headley, Hants,
"*15th June* 1896.

"Dear Miss Chappell,—I want to get a copy of Schubert's Songs (piano and vocal score), containing Shakespeare's song from Cymbeline, 'Hark, hark, the Lark,' &c., 'Der Wanderer,' and "Wasserfläke'(?) I have a vague recollection that these songs are all in one collection in paper covers; but I daren't expose my ignorance to your uncle by writing to Bond Street directly. I also want a copy of 'I don't want to play in your yard;' and here again my pen shrinks from ordering that unhallowed combination of Schubert and the Music Halls. And I don't know that I've got the title right!

"But will you, please, make a memorandum of what you think I mean, and what I ought to have! and give it to your uncle to hand to his clerks to procure for me, and send to me at this address in the regular way of business? It will be *so* good of you.

"I merely passed through London coming here yesterday, but I returned your Fitzgerald by post, I hope safely, though in haste. It's a wonderful book. I should like to know what you have thought of it, and I thank you heartily for lending it to me. Yours always,

BRET HARTE.

"*P.S.*—If Schubert has made the mistake of not writing any of those German songs you can let me know!!"

"To Miss CHAPPELL.

"ARFORD HOUSE, HEADLEY, HANTS,
"*27th June*, 1896.

"DEAR MISS CHAPPELL,—Thank you, over and over again, for your kind and intelligent despatch of my little commissions. The Schubert collection is exactly the one I wanted, and I have sent it off, with the other song (which, however, I really think *you* would like). It's very naïve and childlike, and 'cunning,' as we say in America when we mean 'artless,' and the air emphasises the words very takingly.

"Now, my dear *Fräulein Directorin* of the *Metzler Gesellschaft*, I would not only 'entertain' your idea of my writing some words for children's songs, but I will give the idea 'lodging' in my mind permanently. It's a good idea. But I don't know yet that I am the person to achieve it. But, oddly enough, I've written some verses (not yet published, I think) called 'What Miss Edith saw from her Window,' which might suit, or at least which you might read, and I have sent for a proof of them to forward to you. At least you will see that *my* idea is to portray a child's feelings, superstitions, and fancies in its own simple language. And the real question will be how this sort of thing can be metrically conveyed in musical rhythm. The verses I allude to now are of the same sentiment and motive as the other verses of 'Miss Edith,' which you may remember in the 'Poems,' but a much better metre, of four alternate long and short lines to each verse, with the regular refrain of, 'And *that's* what I see from my window.'

"I have also an idea of a poem called 'I'm the Girl at the Top of the Class,' with that refrain. But all this we can talk of some other time, I only mention it that you may understand that the idea has already 'lodgment' in my mind. But what that mind is capable of nourishing and achieving is another question!—Yours always,

BRET HARTE."

Those who are fortunate enough to possess Bret Harte's volume entitled "Some Later Verses," will know that "What Miss Edith saw from her Window" is one of his daintiest conceits.

"To Miss CHAPPELL.

"THE RED HOUSE, CAMBERLEY, SURREY,
"*June* 24, 1901.

"DEAR MISS CHAPPELL,—I am afraid it wouldn't be possible for me to come down to 'Iver Lodge, Iver' (what a sweetly pretty name, the prettiest that *iver* was!), for I am going to Warwickshire after leaving here on the 27th. I might achieve Goring, though, later, if I 'was good' and worked hard; and I shall try to earn that pleasure.

"But, dear me! how excessively ambulant you are since you let your house! What wild dissipation of outings! First, Iver Lodge, then Goring, and then the Sea!

"Your answer to the incomplete half-riddle was very, very good! It reminds me that the other day in Lancaster Gate I met the Sultan of Morocco, who begged me to ask you if you knew what was the reason why the man who found Poker Flat, and therefore taught London Bridge and Water-Loo, why he nevertheless failed to make them *successful players?* When I told him I would ask you, he then implored me to inform you that the reason why was that none of them had the 'Luck of Roaring Camp'! This beautiful Oriental compliment to both of us touched me deeply!!!—Yours always sincerely,

BRET HARTE."

In the late years of his life he made a hobby of photography, and in his initial efforts he was often helped by one of my daughters. The usual startling amateur results constantly ensued, and the following jocular letter suggests that, on at least one occasion, I must have been sadly though unconsciously in the way of the experimentalists, as they worked in the hot sunshine of my old-world garden.

"ARFORD HOUSE, HEADLEY, HANTS,
"*November* 23, 1896.

"DEAR MISS MAY,—Thank you so much for the small indefinite pictures of me and the huge distinctive one of your father's foot. It may be a foolish, human weakness, but I *should* have liked (as the photos are small) to have had *one* plate *all to myself!* But I am very thankful all the same!

"Do you keep a lot of small plates with *his* foot in the corner—a sort of perpetual reminder, a kind of *ex pede Herculem*, you know? *I* don't mind, but it must be very discomposing and *ominous* to the average *young* man whom you may take!

"Give my love to your mother and father, and believe me—Yours always, BRET HARTE."

Encouraging her to persevere, he wrote:—

"74 LANCASTER GATE, W., *Thursday*.

"DEAR MISS MAY,—I send you the two photographs I spoke of that you may see Boyd's Rembrandt effect with the little Kodak; also, in a separate parcel, a magnesium light for photographing at night or on a dark day. You must hold the magnesium light, with its reflector, in your hand so as to throw the light on any object (including your father's foot, of course) or any part of the room you wish to show. . . . You light the end of the little magnesium ribbon that projects from the holder and 'play it out' by the crank as you want it. A very little will do for an instantaneous picture.

"I am told that some people light *the whole of the ribbon at once* to get a stronger and more protracted light. But as this is always accompanied by the sudden disappearance of the house and the spectators and the operator, and the calling out of the village fire-engine, perhaps you had better not try it. Your parents might object. And, for a young lady, it might seem somewhat *ostentatious!!* . . .—Yours very sincerely, BRET HARTE."

"The Red House, Camberley, Surrey,
"*December* 8, 1899.

"Dear Miss May,—The dovecot is finished and ready for your pigeons, and if you will kindly send me the pair you spoke of, 'The Red House' will be delighted. Don't give yourself any trouble, for I shall be very glad to remit to you any disbursements you may have to make to others to enable the birds to travel comfortably, and as becomes their degree and condition as former tenants of Pye Corner. If there are any first-class pigeon tickets, take 'em! I should not like them to mix with any 'tumblers' or *vulgar acrobatic fowls* travelling 'on tour.'

"Let me know when they leave and when they may be expected, and they shall be looked after at Camberley station.

"I am here trying to get rid of a nasty cold which I set up in London after leaving Broadway. But the fog and gloom have followed me even to this Surrey hillside! But I shall see that the pigeons are safely housed, unless—horrible thought!—they should turn out to be *carrier pigeons* and calmly return to you. In which case I shall send all sorts of abusive messages stuck all over their wings!

"With love to all at Pye Corner.—Yours very sincerely,
Bret Harte."

"74 LANCASTER GATE, W., *March* 17, 1899.

"DEAR MISS MAY,—Many thanks for the handsome typewritten copy of 'Sue' which your father had promised you should do for me.

. . . . . .

"Were you not alarmed at the 'prompt' directions, especially those cabalistic fractions about the '½, ¼' lights? The 'blue in bunches' and the 'whites slowly out' are dreadfully creepy!

"By the way, have you photographed with your magnesium light? I have bought one just like yours, but have not tried it yet. You might give me a hint if you have used yours.

"I hope you have good news of your wandering parents in the North. Are they still 'on tour'? I am expecting to hear from your father in a day or two. I would have written to him, but I have been quite laid up with neuralgia.—Yours always sincerely, BRET HARTE."

"74 LANCASTER GATE, W., *December* 28, 1899.

"DEAR MISS MAY,—I have just heard from 'The Red House,' Camberley, that one of the male pigeons managed to squeeze himself through the wires while in temporary confinement and escaped, leaving his mate disconsolate. He is said to have lingered for some fifteen minutes over the place, in jeering or regretful contemplation of the others, and then apparently steered his course to Worcestershire, and finally, Pye Corner.

"Will you kindly keep a lookout at your own dovecot for the deserter? You may be able to bring comfort to his abandoned mate and joy to the sorrowing household at the Red House; but I have my doubts! It had the look of a premeditated desertion!—Yours always sincerely,

BRET HARTE.

"*P.S.*—If he should be so unprincipled a bird as to make his appearance at Pye Corner with *another mate*, hoping you would not detect the difference, don't be deceived! The real victim is *here*.

B. H."

To a lady who greatly admired his works and who frequently wrote to him about them, he always replied at length. Indeed, as will be seen, he consulted her about books that he wanted to read. It was a curious episode in his experiences, for he and his gentle correspondent never met.

"To Miss JACKSON.

"AVERLEY TOWER, FARNHAM, SURREY,
"*September* 6, 1898.

"DEAR MISS JACKSON,—Your wonderful sympathy with rare books, and, perhaps more than all, your tireless good-nature to me, prompts me to ask you a real favour.

"I want to get a copy of Cobbett's 'Rural Rides.' I don't think Quaritch could help me as the book would seem to him vulgarly *new*, having been published in the earlier part of *this* century, and I should shrink from shocking the noble spirit of B. Q., and incurring a rebuff like that administered to Lord Ashburnham. I know Cobbett only vaguely, as a Reference of some kind, but he has written some descriptions of this locality—a locality which I have now known for three years as the most rural part of England—and I am told he has recorded his knowledge in the 'Rural Rides.' I have been dependent upon my 'White's Selborne' for my information hitherto, but even that charming book does not entirely satisfy my cravings.

"Perhaps it may be in that wonderful library of yours from which you dip out such prizes between your fingers. Perhaps you may know to whom I may apply for it. I have no knowledge of its size or value. I should like to *purchase* it, or, if necessary, *borrow* it; while I might shrink, *at first*, from larcenous abstraction of it, or the necessary effacement of its owner, I can conceive of circumstances in which either of these suicide acts, or indeed *both* of them, might be consistent and justifiable. Far be it from me, however, to recommend such a course to any young lady who might not bring to the process that swiftness of locomotion or dexterity of arm necessary to its fullest execution—but I should ask no questions!

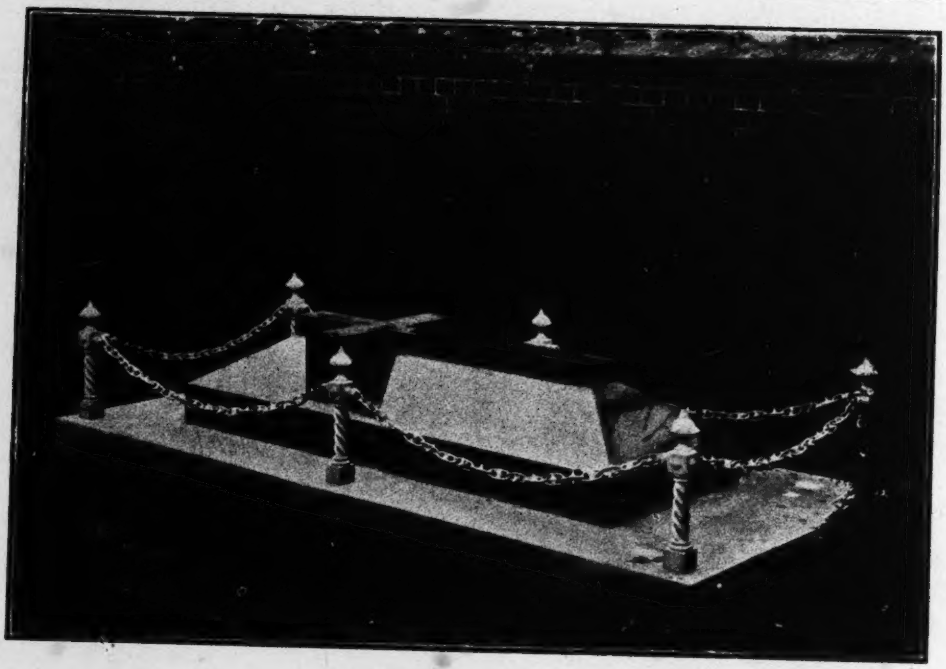
"If you had driven—as I did yesterday—over thirty-six miles of deliciously rural solitude, under a sun that has at last warmed up all England so that the balm of heather and pine absolutely quivered in the dazzling light of the moor; or dived into the shadows of 'Alice Holt' wood, which I think Shakespeare had in his mind when he drew the 'Forest of Arden,' then you would understand how I long for some information of what I saw. However, you have only your own good-nature to thank for my troubling you in this way so soon again.—Yours always sincerely, BRET HARTE."

"To Miss JACKSON.

"AVERLEY TOWER, FARNHAM, SURREY,
"*Oct.* 6, 1893.

"DEAR MISS JACKSON,—I have just sent you, by parcel post, your big book on Surrey, with many, many thanks for the loan of it. I was loth to part with it, but it was rather large for my desk table here, and I did not dare to trust it out of my sight.

"I have kept the 'Rural Rides,' as you probably *know*, but I will confess to you that I loathe it—which you *don't* know! I got it solely as a *protection* from an acquaintance, who, whenever I asked for information regarding localities in this district always looked at me compassionately, and said, 'Ah, you should read Cobbett's "Rural Rides,"—wonderful man!—has ridden all over this district.' That is



Bret Harte's grave in Frimley Churchyard.
Inscribed

Bret Harte
August 25th, 1839. May 5th, 1902.
In Faithful Remembrance.
M. S. Van de Velde.

[*To face p.* 328.

how I got landed among 'Swedes' and political meetings in low 'pot-houses,' and dissertations upon 'paper money,' and the number of bushels of corn per case—and, worst of all, abuse of my pet tree—the *pine!* under the title of 'beggarly firs'! But I have 'crammed' myself out of it with things I don't want to know, just to revenge myself on my acquaintance (who I shrewdly suspect never read the book), and be able to meet him with uninteresting facts.

"I should have told you this before, but I have been laid by the heels here with a horrible complaint called 'lumbago,' which prevents my standing upright before the meanest of my species, and makes me go doddering round from room to room like the old stage peasant who is visiting the scenes of his childhood, and twinges me as I bend over my desk. But if I don't enjoy the 'Rural Rides' for itself, I enjoy the revenge it gives me, and I thank you heartily for helping me to it.—Yours very sincerely,

BRET HARTE."

"To Miss JACKSON.

"THE RED HOUSE, CAMBERLEY, SURREY,
"*April* 6, 1899.

"DEAR MISS JACKSON,—I was kept in town, and so spent the usual empty London Easter Holiday, while it might have been greatly relieved by your pleasant Easter offerings, which, however, I did not find until I arrived here yesterday. So I had them awaiting me with the daffodils and the sunshine.

"I must confess to you that while I shall read and value the 'Holy War,' I never, as a boy, was able to take John Bunyan seriously. The 'Pilgrim's Progress' affected me very much in the same way as the converted Africans or Indians who were introduced to me at Sunday School by their missionary showmen, and who talked 'baboon' or 'pigeon' English. I don't think that I, or any other bad boy, was ever convinced by personified Vices or Virtues, or even regarded them as anything but amusing wax figures. I know I used to roar with laughter over 'Mr. Facing-both-ways' and 'Mr. By-Ends,' to the great detriment of my spiritual education. It seemed to me an insult to my intelligence—you know how sensitive a boy's intelligence is—and how so many good, moral people persistently overlook it, and make their young friends regard them as unbounded liars!—and I would have none of it. When will people learn that Allegory is a dissipation for the mature intellect, and not to be given to babes and sucklings?

"I am afraid that John Bunyan became to me a kind of antiquated 'Stiggins.'

"But this is not pretty Easter talk, and I don't know how I dropped into it, with all this sunshine about me on the Surrey hills. I only intended to thank you most sincerely for your charming gifts.—Yours always sincerely, BRET HARTE."

In the next letter he refers to a visit to my home. How well I remember walking with him and interrupting his conversation to beg him to look at that red-berried and frost-bedizened holly bush. Little did I think then how minutely and beautifully he meant to describe it. Indeed at the time he seemed to take little or no notice of it, and asked me laughingly if that was one of the "great sights" of a Cotswold village. In this way he (unknown to others) observed things, and from them limned delicate cabinet pictures.

"To Miss Jackson.

"74 Lancaster Gate, W.,
"*Nov.* 25, 1899.

"Dear Miss Jackson,—I know you are long-suffering and forgiving, and I suppose that is the reason why I impose on your kindness, and haven't answered your last letter before. To simply say I have been very busy, and twice very far from London, since I received it, is some sort of explanation, but no excuse, so I throw myself on your mercy.

"I may not talk about the beautiful flowers you sent me, but I enjoyed them all the same. And I may tell you that in connection with them, and other things 'that pretty bin,' I thought how *you* would have enjoyed a charming Christmas card I saw the other morning—painted freshly by Nature. It was a frosty morning in Worcestershire (a sudden drop of the thermometer in the night to eight degrees of frost)—a bush of broad-leaved holly which stood by the wall of an old house, and was already brilliant with its berries, had each leaf exquisitely frosted *at its outer edge*, as if trimmed with delicate white lace. The shining green of the leaf itself was undisturbed—only the spiny edges were touched with the rime, and each leaf was in itself a marvel of symmetrical outlining. The stone-wall background was of that neutral tint which old stone takes on through age and weather in that district, and which is a little apt to make all colour glaring by too great relief, but it was wonderful how the red berries were brought into perfect harmony with the wall and the leaf by this one graceful touch of frost. I was wrong to say it was like lace, nor would silver describe it, for it had the faintest sparkle of crystal in its dead white colour. It made a picture where it stood, while it made the whole foggy, india-ink-washed landscape gracious.

"I ought to say that it kept me from writing to you; but it didn't, and I scorn the excuse. But I know you would have forgiven me if you could have seen it; it was impossible to be anything but good in its presence, and perhaps my telling you about it may do something to condone the negligence of, yours very sincerely,
BRET HARTE."

"To Miss JACKSON.

"74 LANCASTER GATE, W.,
"*April* 2, 1900.

"DEAR MISS JACKSON,—I will not say that I sacredly promised my mother that I would never, *never* send a post-card to a lady, for post-cards weren't invented in her day, and perhaps she knew the folly of asking me to promise anything, and I don't think you'd believe in me anyway, but I *will* say that I have never sent one, and should as soon think of shouting to you in the street as of taking the General Post-office into my confidence with you. Wherefore have I placed your very pretty blue card with its complemental pink stamp on my shelf with your books, where it shall remain pure and undefiled, while I take my usual white sheet of note-paper to convey to you that my address will be here until Thursday, and afterwards at the Red House, Camberley, for a few weeks.

"Now you will please forgive me for again breaking your rules and express commands in my usual selfish way, and let me thank you in advance for the violets, though I don't deserve 'em, I know.—Yours always sincerely, BRET HARTE."

He was very fond of his comparison between the man who sent him a post-card, and the man who would offend him by shouting at him across a street, though I think the shouting existed only in his fertile imagination. But he made me give up sending him that convenient form of message. Everything that left his desk had to be finished in a way that satisfied him, and he expected others to take the same pains with their correspondence.

It was so with everything he undertook. When the proprietors of *Munsey's Magazine* asked him to write an article on his favourite novelist and his best book, he explained in the most elaborate way why Alexandre Dumas's famous romance of "Monte Cristo" was the novel he placed first, and showed very clearly the reasons for its hold upon the readers of three generations. When the editor of *The Idler* requested a confession concerning his first book, he responded in no perfunctory or egotistical way but wrote a really amusing article explaining his "first book" was not his own but a volume of Californian Verse that under the most extraordinary and troubled conditions he collected and edited for others. A perfect epitome of the wise, witty, and tender sayings he scattered broadcast through his works is to be found in the "Bret Harte Birthday Book," carefully and very tastefully compiled by Madame Van de Velde.

During the later years of his life he manifestly sought retirement. Society saw little of him; and to clubland he was almost lost. The Beefsteak, the Rabelais, the Kinsmen, and other unique côteries missed his welcome presence and clever talk. Indeed the Royal Thames Yacht Club, of which he was a member, became his favourite resort when he wanted any distraction from his own home. This selection seemed to me so odd—for he had no love of yachting—that I questioned him concerning it. "Why, my dear fellow," he said, "don't you see? I never use a club until I am tired of my work and want relief from it. If I go to a literary club I am asked all sorts of questions as to what I am doing, and my views on somebody's last book, and to these I am expected to reply at length. Now my good friends in Albemarle Street talk of their yachts, don't want my advice about them, are good enough to let me listen, and I come away refreshed by their conversation."

But to his old and close friends he was ever the same fascinating, affectionate, and lovable comrade. It is good now to think of the pleasant peaceful days he enjoyed in his favourite English counties. At the pretty village of Headley in Hampshire, and at Camberley in Surrey, he spent happy summers delighting in his surroundings, and declaring that the spice-scents of the pine trees that crested the hills carried him back to early Californian days.

To be with him in the country was no ordinary treat. In all its aspects he loved nature, and, though he held quaint theories about them, he had a winsome love for dumb animals.

"Just look at that," he said to me as in a country lane we saw a donkey absolutely and hopelessly declining to drag a small load up a slight hill; "they say a donkey is the prototype of a fool, but I tell you he has more common-sense than any animal I know. That donkey really knows what he wants, and he is *going to have his own way.*" And he did! "Now," he said, continuing the talk, "the horse is always described as a noble animal. Compare him with his humble friend the donkey, and he is an idiot. He has ten times his strength, and more than ten times the strength of a man, and yet he allows himself to be saddled and harnessed, bitted and spurred, ridden and driven, lashed and exhausted, until he becomes a mere bundle of trembling sweating nerves. I take off my hat to the self-insisting and determined donkey." I regret to say that, continuing the argument, he said laughingly, "If you come to think of it my appreciation of the donkey race is not misplaced. Are they not like the enduring yet self-willed women of our creation, while we poor harassed men are like those imbecile neurotic horses? I wonder whether you and I are 'noble animals'? I wonder if the horse likes to think he's called that way? I wonder if the donkey plumes itself on the complete success of its alleged folly?"

He was very fond of dogs, and used to say they appealed to him because of "their pathetic and evident consciousness of their own uselessness." Bird-life had a great charm for him, and he was always happy when he chatted with Mr. J. E. Harting, whose "Ornithology of Shakespeare" was one of his pet handbooks.

But he incessantly worked, and I think he enjoyed writing that second series of "Condensed Novels" which, in their collected form, were published after his death, and received with a chorus of praise. At the time he was conscious of failing health, but he wrote these delightful parodies in hearty spirits, and in his truest vein of fun. It is curious that he should have brought his literary career to a close by triumphantly repeating one of his earliest successes. And yet as we laugh over these clever pages we understand what poor Tom Robertson, the dramatist, felt when he wrote of his dead friend Artemus Ward, one of the first American humorists to make a name on these shores:—"It seems so strange that the hand that traced the jokes should be cold, that the tongue that trolled out the good things should be silent; that the jokes and the good things should remain, and the man who made them should be gone for ever."

CHAPTER IX

"CROSSING THE BAR"

ALTHOUGH we all knew that he was more or less ailing, it was not until the early months of 1902 that the condition of Bret Harte's health caused serious anxiety to his friends. Hoping to benefit by fresh air and sunshine he went to stay with his ever sympathetic friend, Madame Van de Velde, at Camberley. But it was a cold, sunless, and disappointing spring, and the ordinary charms of his well-loved Surrey were denied to him. Work became more and more difficult to him, but he could still be jocular even about his health torments. He and I were once more engaged on a play, and no one would think from the letters he constantly wrote me that he was either in pain or in doubt about himself.

In March he submitted to an operation for the throat trouble that was at the root of his ever increasing illness, but even after the pain and the misery of it he wrote to me (*inter alia*)—"Tell your medical student son that the operation and the instrument were so fascinating that they delighted even the victim!"

But the operation only served to stave off an inevitable end, and in spite of his affected high spirits, I think he knew it.

And yet, notwithstanding the depression that must now have almost crushed him, and the pain from which he undoubtedly suffered, he still tried to write. He had been greatly pleased by the reception given to one of his most recent stories, in which his old friend Colonel Starbottle figures at his very best, and in response to an earnest and gratifying request he resolved to show that redoubtable creature in a new light.

On April 17th, saying he felt better, he sat down to his desk to write his new tale. Commencing in his usual painstaking way, and rejecting one beginning for another, he composed the lines that I now reproduce in facsimile on the next page. It was the last, and, alas! the shortest of his "short stories." He never did any more. Nothing more—except to write occasional letters to his friends. I have a note from him bearing later date in which, after touching on other matters, he spoke with infinite good-humour and yet rather plaintively of his health troubles.

To the last he was kindly — and that is only to say, like himself. One of the horrors of his existence was the omnipresent autograph hunter. For a young lady of my household, to whom he could not well say no, he signed his name in her troublesome friend's still more troublesome birthday book, saying, "Tell that young woman I hate, loathe, and despise her." It was in his failing hours that a letter came making a somewhat similar request from a member of President Roosevelt's family. At the moment he condemned it, with the scores of such applications he received, to the wastepaper basket, and then he said—"No! that may be from a child. I'll send my signature."

On May 5th, with terrible and unexpected rapidity, the sad end came. By the expert doctors who attended him it had not been wholly unforeseen; but for those who were with him at the time it was beyond all description distressing. He had risen at his usual hour, and there was nothing in his appearance or manner to indicate that the end was so near. He was sitting at his writing-table when an alarming attack of hemorrhage gave the sad warning note. He went to his bedroom, and medical aid was quickly at hand. Although much weakened he rallied, and it was not until late in the afternoon that a second attack rendered him partially unconscious, and he passed peacefully away in the presence of his dear friend Madame Van de Velde and her attendants.

In accordance with his well-known views on such subjects the funeral was a very simple one. Among the few who followed him to his ivy-lined grave were Mrs. Bret Harte, his son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Francis King Harte, his daughter, Miss Ethel Harte, Madame Van de Velde, Colonel Collins, Mr. A. S. Boyd, and a small cluster of grief-stricken friends.

A Friend of Colonel Sackville

"I said a friend of mine," returned the Colonel a little loftily; "and when I used the term I did not ~~[illegible]~~ degrade it, as is usual and so — I find, Sir, much to regret — unspeakably synonymous, with that levity which ~~[illegible]~~ marked the ye-present day."

The Colonel's manner was slightly exaggerated as he had detected a cavalier tone in the stranger's first acceptance of the statement.

And so he lies in quiet Frimley churchyard, thin sound of the rustling pine-trees, and in the art of a country he knew and loved well. His iet graveside has already drawn many pilgrims, d it may confidently be predicted that as the years ll by their number will increase.

Of the universal sorrow with which the news of s death was received I need not speak, though from e or two letters it seems only right that I should ote.

Miss Mary C. Froude said :—

"His friends all loved him. I loved him very uch, and greatly because he was such a true friend my father's. He was also more than kind to me, d I always reverenced his high-minded generous lf, and his utter aloofness from aught mean or nasty, r all that he was a man of the world, and knew life der all aspects."

The Marquis of Northampton wrote :—

"I cannot in words say how sad I am and how rribly I feel the loss of my good friend. I not ly loved him, but I respected him and long to let e world know what he really was—very human but ith such noble intentions and feelings. He always d me good, and I shall miss him much."

Among the obituary notices that deeply touched s English friends were those signed by Mr. Theodore Vatts-Dunton, Mr. Richard Le Gallienne, Mr. G. B. urgin, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, and, from over the as, by Mr. Noah Brooks and Mr. Joaquin Miller.

When it was known that I had undertaken this work I had many kindly letters from his distinguished friends in America.

Colonel John Hay wrote:—

"I shall look forward with much pleasurable anticipation to reading your life of our dear friend, who will always be one of the most attractive and charming figures of the nineteenth century. . . . Bret Harte was one of my dear and honoured friends. His gentle and amiable personality endeared him to all who were admitted to the privilege of his intimacy; his great achievements in literature made his fame a substantial national possession. My attachment to him as a friend, my pride in him as a great American, alike make it impossible for me to write about him in the hurry which is my fate."

"I am glad," said my kind friend Mr. William Winter, "that you will write the Life of Bret Harte. I knew how you would feel about his death. We have lost the Prince of our profession, the representative man of letters. His genius was no less original than fine; he was a master at once of pathos and humour; and his sense of character was extraordinary. He drew from life, but he was an *artist*, not a *copyist*. Within his peculiar field he was as distinctive as Edgar Poe, and within that field he had no rival."

And Mr. Charles Warren Stoddard, to whom I owe much, said:—

"I shall be glad to have my name associated with his in your book, for he made me what I am, and I owe all to him."

A French appreciation of him from the gifted pen ot Madame Marie Anne de Bovet (the Marquise de Boishebert) is soon to appear. The lady knew him well, and has the highest admiration for his genius.

It is easier to begin than to finish a book in which each line is written under the consciousness of a deep personal sorrow. As he approaches the conclusion of his task, the anxious writer must ask himself if he has done even scant justice to a subject very near his heart. As far as in me lies I have endeavoured, through his stories, and all that in happy hours he told me about them and his experiences, to let Bret Harte tell the history of his life, and in his own eloquent words, rather than my halting ones, I will end.

He left on record the motives that inspired his work, and he was never more earnest than when defending himself he wrote:—

"He has been repeatedly cautioned, kindly and unkindly, intelligently and unintelligently, against his alleged tendency to confuse recognised standards of morality by extenuating lives of recklessness, and often criminality, with a single solitary virtue. He might easily show that he has never written a sermon, that he has never moralised or commented upon the actions of his heroes, that he has never voiced a creed or obtrusively demonstrated an ethical opinion. He might easily allege that this merciful effect of his art arose from the reader's weak human sympathies, and holds himself irresponsible. But he would be conscious of a more miserable weakness in thus divorcing himself from his fellowmen who in the domain of art must ever walk hand-in-hand with him. So he prefers to say that of all the various forms in which Cant presents itself to suffering humanity, he knows of none so outrageous, so illogical, so undemonstrable, so marvellously absurd as the Cant of 'Too Much Mercy.' When it shall be proven to him that communities are degraded and brought to guilt and crime, suffering or destitution, from a predominance of this quality; when he shall see pardoned ticket-of-leave men elbowing men of austere lives out of situation and position, and the repentant Magdalen supplanting the blameless virgin in society, then he will lay aside his pen and extend his hand to the new Draconian discipline in fiction. But until then he will, without claiming to be a religious man or a moralist, but simply as an artist, reverently and humbly conform to the rules laid down by a Great Poet, who created the parable of the 'Prodigal Son' and the 'Good Samaritan'—whose works have lasted eighteen hundred years, and will remain when the present writer and his generation are forgotten. And he is conscious of uttering no original doctrine in this, but of only voicing the beliefs of a few of his literary brethren happily living, and one gloriously dead, who never made proclamation of this 'from the housetops.'"

The last time Bret Harte stayed in my house he left one of his penholders on my desk, "to use when he came again." With a sad heart I take it up now to copy his beautiful verses "On a Pen of Thomas Starr King." When he wrote them, nearly forty years ago, he little thought how wonderfully they would apply to himself when he, too, had "crossed the bar."

"This is the reed the dead musician dropped,
With tuneful magic in its sheath still hidden;
The prompt allegro of its music stopped,
Its melodies unbidden.

But who shall finish the unfinished strain,
Or wake the instrument to awe or wonder,
And bid the slender barrel breathe again,
An organ-pipe of thunder!

His pen! what humbler memories cling about
Its golden curves! What shapes and laughing graces
Slipped from its point, when his full heart went out
In smiles and courtly phrases?

The truth, half jesting, half in earnest flung;
The word of cheer with recognition in it;
The note of alms, whose golden speech outrung
The golden gift within it.

But all in vain the enchanter's wand we wave:
No stroke of ours recalls his magic vision:
The incantation that its power gave
Sleeps with the dead magician."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Setting far less value on his works than that accorded to them by his readers, Bret Harte kept no record of them, and I have therefore found it impossible to add dates to the great majority of those here enumerated. Probably there are some items that he had forgotten, but when, at his wish, I (a few years ago) wrote out the greater part of the list, he told me he believed it to be exhaustive. There are several other plays that he wrote in collaboration with me, but as these have so far been neither produced nor published, I have not included them.

I regret that I am unable to give the names of his American publishers, or, with a few exceptions, the dates when his poems and stories first appeared in his own country.

T. Edgar Pemberton.

POEMS AND DRAMA

NATIONAL POEMS

John Burns of Gettysburg.
"How are you, Sanitary?"
Battle Bunny (Malvern Hill, 1864).
The Reveille.
Our Privilege.
Relieving Guard (T. S. K., obit. 4th March 1864).
The Goddess.
On a Pen of Thomas Starr King.
A Second Review of the Grand Army.
The Copperhead (1864).
A Sanitary Message.
The Old Major Explains (Reunion, Army of the Potomac, 12th May 1871).
California's Greeting to Seward (1869).
The Aged Stranger.
The Idyl of Battle Hollow (War of the Rebellion, 1864).
Caldwell of Springfield (New Jersey, 1780).
Poem (Delivered on the Fourteenth Anniversary of California's Admission into the Union, 9th September 1864).
Miss Blanche Says.
An Arctic Vision.
St. Thomas (A Geographical Survey, 1868).
Off Scarborough (September 1779).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

SPANISH IDYLS AND LEGENDS

The Miracle of Padre Junipero.
The Wonderful Spring of San Joaquin.
The Angelus (Heard at the Mission Dolores, 1868).
Concepcion de Arguello (Presidio de San Francisco, 1800).
"For the King" (Northern Mexico, 1640).
Ramon.
Don Diego of the South (Refectory, Mission San Gabriel, 1869).
At the Hacienda.
Friar Pedro's Ride.
In the Mission Garden (1865).
The Lost Galleon.

POEMS IN DIALECT

"Jim."
Chiquita.
Dow's Flat (1856).
In the Tunnel.
"Cicely."
Penelope (Simpson's Bar, 1858).
Plain Language from Truthful James (Table Mountain, 1870).
The Society upon the Stanislaus.
Luke (in the Colorado Park, 1873).
"The Babes in the Wood" (Big Pine Flat, 1871).
The Latest Chinese Outrage.
Truthful James to the Editor (Yreka, 1873).
An Idyl of the Road (Sierras, 1876).
Thompson of Angel's.
The Hawk's Nest.
Her Letter.
His Answer to "Her Letter."
The Return of Belisarius (Mud Flat, 1860).
Further Language from Truthful James (Nye's Ford, Stanislaus, 1870).
After the Accident.
The Ghost that Jim Saw.
"Seventy-Nine."
The Stage-Driver's Story.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

A Greyport Legend (1797).
A Newport Romance.
San Francisco (From the Sea).
The Mountain Heart's-Ease.
Grizzly.
Madrono.
Coyote.
To a Sea Bird (Santa Cruz, 1869).
What the Chimney Sang.
Dickens in Camp.
"Twenty Years."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS—*continued*

Fate.
Grandmother Tenderden (Massachusetts Shore, 1800).
Guild's Signal.
Aspiring Miss De Laine (A Chemical Narrative).
A Legend of Cologne.
The Tale of a Pony.
On a Cone of the Big Trees.
Lone Mountain (Cemetery, San Francisco).
Alnaschar.
The Two Ships.
Address (Delivered at the Opening of the California Theatre, San Francisco, 19th January 1870).
Dolly Varden.
Telemachus *versus* Mentor.
What the Wolf really said to Little Red-Riding Hood.
Half-an-Hour Before Supper.
What the Bullet Sang.
Cadet Grey.

PARODIES, &c.

Before the Curtain.
To the Pliocene Skull (A Geological Address).
The Ballad of Mr. Cook (A Legend of the Cliff House, San Francisco).
The Ballad of the Emeu.
Mrs. Judge Jenkins (Being the only genuine Sequel to Maud Muller).
A Geological Madrigal.
Avitor (An Aerial Retrospect).
The Willows (After Edgar Allan Poe).
North Beach (After Spenser).
The Lost Tails of Miletus.
The Ritualist (By a Communicant of St. James's).
A Moral Vindicator.
California Madrigal (On the Approach of Spring).
What the Engines Said (Opening of the Pacific Railroad).
The Legends of the Rhine.
Songs without Sense.

LITTLE POSTERITY

Master Johnny's Next-Door Neighbour.
Miss Edith's Modest Request.
Miss Edith Makes it Pleasant for Brother Jack.
Miss Edith Makes another Friend.
On the Landing (An Idyl of the Balusters).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

DRAMA

"Two Men of Sandy Bar." Produced in America.

"Sue" (Founded on "The Judgment of Bolinas Plain," in collaboration with T. Edgar Pemberton. Produced at Hoyt's Theatre, New York, on 15th September 1896, and at the Garrick Theatre, London, 10th June 1898).

"The Lord of Fontenelle" (Operetta).

AMERICAN LEGENDS, &c.

PROSE—EARLIER PAPERS

Mliss.
High-Water Mark.
A Lonely Ride.
The Man of No Account.
Notes by Flood and Field.
Waiting for the Ship.

THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP AND OTHER SKETCHES

The Luck of Roaring Camp.
The Outcasts of Poker Flat.
Miggles.
Tennessee's Partner.
The Idyl of Red Gulch.
Brown of Calaveras.

BOHEMIAN PAPERS

Melons.
A Venerable Impostor.
A Boy's Dog.
Surprising Adventures of Master Charles Summerton.
The Mission Dolores.
Boonder.
From a Balcony.
John Chinaman.
On a Vulgar Little Boy.
From a Back Window.
Sidewalkings.
Charitable Reminiscences.
Seeing the Steamer off.
Neighbourhoods I have Moved From.
My Suburban Residence.
The Ruins of San Francisco.

SPANISH AND AMERICAN LEGENDS

The Legend of Monte del Diablo.
The Right Eye of the Commander.
The Legend of Devil's Point.
The Adventure of Padre Vincentio.
The Devil and the Broker.
The Ogress of Silver Land.
The Little Drummer, or the Christmas Gift that came to Rupert.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

TALES OF THE ARGONAUTS

The Iliad of Sandy Bar.
Mr. Thompson's Prodigal.
The Romance of Madrono Hollow.
The Poet of Sierra Flat.
The Princess Bob and her Friends.
How Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar.
Mrs. Skagg's Husbands.
An Episode of Fiddletown.
A Passage in the Life of Mr. John Oakhurst.
The Rose of Tuolumne.
A Monte Flat Pastoral.
Baby Sylvester.
Wan Lee, the Pagan.
An Heiress of Red Dog.
The Man on the Beach.
Roger Catron's Friend.
"Jinny."
Two Saints of the Foot-Hills.
"Who was My Quiet Friend?"
A Tourist from Injianny.
The Fool of Five Forks.
The Man from Solano.
A Ghost of the Sierras.

EASTERN SKETCHES

Views from a German Spion.
Peter Schroeder.
Morning on the Avenues.
My Friend the Tramp.
A Sleeping-Car Experience.
The Man Whose Yoke was not Easy.
The Office-Seeker.
With the Entrées.

GABRIEL CONROY

A Novel in Seven Books.

STORIES

The Story of a Mine.
Thankful Blossom: A Romance of the Jerseys (1779).
The Twins of Table Mountain.
Jeff Brigg's Love Story.

CONDENSED NOVELS

Muck-a-Muck: A Modern Indian Novel (After Cooper).
Selina Sedilia. By Miss E. B—dd and Mrs. H—n—y W—d.
The Ninety-Nine Guardsmen. By Al—x—d—r D—m—s.
Miss Mix. By Ch—l—tte Br—nté.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CONDENSED NOVELS—*continued*

Mr. Midshipman Breezy: A Naval Officer. By Captain M—rry—t, R.N.

Guy Heavystone; or, Entire: A Muscular Novel. By the Author of "Sword and Gun."

John Jenkins; or, The Smoker Reformed. By T. S. A—th—r.

Fantine. After the French of Victor Hugo.

La Femme. After the French of M. Michelet.

The Dweller of the Threshold. By Sir Ed—d L—tt—n B—l—wr.

N N. Being a Novel in the French Paragraphic Style.

No Title. By W—lk—e C—ll—ns.

Handsome is as Handsome Does. By Ch—s R—de.

Lothaw; or, The Adventures of a Young Gentleman in Search of "Religion." By Mr. Benjamins.

The Haunted Man: A Christmas Story. By Ch—s D—ck—ns.

The Hoodlum Band; or, The Boy Chief, the Infant Politician, and the Pirate Prodigy.

TALES OF THE PACIFIC SLOPE

Flip.
Maruja.
A Waif of the Plains.
A Phyllis of the Sierras.
Found at Blazing Star.
A Drift from Redwood Camp.
A Gentleman of La Porte.
A Ward of the Golden Gate.
A Sappho of Green Springs.
The Chatelaine of Burnt Ridge.
Through the Santa Clara Wheat.
A Maecenas of the Pacific Slope.
Colonel Starbottle's Client.
The Postmistress of Laurel Run.
A Night at "Hay's."
Johnson's "Old Woman."
The New Assistant at Pine Clearing School.
In a Pioneer Restaurant.
A Treasure of the Galleon.
The Ghosts of Stukeley Castle.
The Great Deadwood Mystery.

TALES OF THE PINE AND CYPRESS

Snow-Bound at Eagle's.
Susy.
Sally Dows.
The Conspiracy of Mrs. Bunker.
The Transformation of Buckeye Camp.
Their Uncle from California.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BUCKEYE AND CHAPPARAL

A Protégé of Jack Hamlin's.
An Ingenue of the Sierras.
The Reformation of James Reddy.
The Heir of the M'Hulishes.
An Episode of West Woodlands.
The Mystery of the Hacienda.
The Bell-Ringer of Angel's.
Johnnyboy.
Young Robin Gray.
The Sheriff of Siskyou.
A Rose of Glenbogie.
The Home-Coming of Jim Wilkes.
"Chu-Chu!"

TALES OF TRAIL AND TOWN

Barker's Luck.
A Yellow Dog.
A Mother of Five.
Bulger's Reputation.
In the Tules.
A Convert of the Mission.
The Indiscretion of Elsbeth.
The Devotion of Enriquez.
A Millionnaire of Rough & Ready.
The Ancestors of Peter Atherly.
Two Americans.
The Judgment of Bolinas Plain.
The Strange Experience of Alkali Dick.
A Night on the Divide.
The Youngest Prospector in Calaveras.
A Tale of Three Truants.

STORIES IN LIGHT AND SHADOW

"Unser Karl."
Uncle Jim and Uncle Billy.
See Yup.
The Desborough Connections.
Salomy Jane's Kiss.
The Man and the Mountain.
The Passing of Enriquez.

MR. JACK HAMLIN'S MEDIATION, AND OTHER STORIES

Mr. Jack Hamlin's Mediation.
The Man at the Semaphore.
An Esmerelda of Rocky Cañon.
Dick Spindler's Family Christmas.
When the Waters were up at "Jules."
The Boom in the *Calaveras Clarion.*
The Secret of Sobriente's Well.
Liberty Jones's Discovery.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

FROM SAND-HILL TO PINE

A Niece of "Snapshot Harry's."
What Happened at the Fonda.
A Jack and Jill of the Sierras.
A Belle of Canada City.
A Treasure of the Redwoods.
Mr. Bilson's Housekeeper.
How I Went to the Mines.

UNDER THE REDWOODS

Jimmy's Big Brother from California.
The Youngest Miss Piper.
A Widow of the Santa Ana Valley.
The Mermaid of Lighthouse Point.
Under the Eaves.
How Reuben Allen saw Life in San Francisco.
Three Vagabonds of Trinidad.
A Vision of the Fountain.
A Romance of the Line.
Bohemian Days in San Francisco.

ON THE OLD TRAIL

A Mercury of the Foothills.
Colonel Starbottle for the Plaintiff.
The Landlord of the Big Flume Hotel.
A Buckeye Hollow Inheritance.
The Re-incarnation of Smith.
Lanty Foster's Mistake.
An Ali Baba of the Sierras.
Miss Peggy's Protégés.
The Goddess of Excelsior.

CONDENSED NOVELS

New Burlesques

Rupert the Resembler. By A—th—y H—pe.
The Stolen Cigar Case. By A. C—n—n D—le.
Golly and the Christian; or, The Minx and the Manxman. By H—ll C—ne.
The Adventures of John Longbowe, Yoeman. Compiled from several eminent sources.
Dan'l Borem. By E. N—s— W—t—t.
Stories Three—
  For Simla Reasons.
  A Private's Honour.
  Jungle Folk. By R—dy—d K—pl—g.
"Zut-Ski." By M—r—e C—r—lli.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

OTHER WORKS

- The Queen of the Pirate Isle. A Tale for Children. Illustrated by Kate Greenaway.
- Devil's Food.
- Clarence.
- In a Hollow of the Hills.
- Three Partners; or, The Big Strike on Heavy Tree Hill.
- At the Mission of San Carmel.
- A Blue Grass Penelope.
- Left out on Lone Star Mountain.
- The Argonauts of North Liberty.
- The Crusade of the Excelsior.
- Cressy.
- The Heritage of Deadlow Marsh.
- A First Family of Tasajara.
- Drift from Two Shores.
- In the Carquinez Woods.
- An Apostle of the Tules.
- Sarah Walker.
- A Ship of '49.
- Prosper's Old Mother.
- A Pupil of Chestnut Ridge.
- A Ward of Colonel Starbottle's.
- Mr. M'Glowrie's Widow.
- Trent's Trust.
- Dick Boyle's Business Card.
- The Convalescence of Jack Hamlin.
- The Sword of Don José.
- Longfellow (*A Tribute*).
- William Francis Bartlett. Poem (*In Memoriam*).

LATER POEMS

By Pines and Tules

- Artemis in Sierra.
- Jack of the Tules (Southern California).
- The Old Camp Fire.
- "Crotalus" (Rattlesnake Bar, Sierras).
- The Station-Master of Lone Prairie.
- The Mission Bells of Monterey.
- Her Last Letter (Being a Reply to "His Answer").
- Lines to a Portrait (By a Superior Person).
- Old Time and New.

Reported by Truthful James

- The Spelling Bee at Angel's.
- A Question of Privilege.
- The Thought Reader of Angel's.
- Free Silver at Angel's.

Little Posterity

- The Birds of Cirencester.
- What Miss Edith Saw from Her Window.
- "Hasta Mañana."

Bret Harte

1901

A PHOTOGRAPH
RGE E. CLARKE

INDEX

- Albany City, 2
- "Argonauts of '49, The," 38
- "Arsenical Spring of San Joaquin, The," 155
- *Athenæum, The*, 190
- "Autumn Musings," 6

- "Ballad of the Emeu, The," 57
- Barnes, George, 73
- Barrett, Lawrence, 124
- Bartlett, William Francis, 306
- Black, William, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221
- "Blue Grass Penelope, A," 275
- "Bohemian Days in San Francisco," 9
- Booth, Edwin, 294
- Boucicault, Dion, 261
- Boughton, G. H., R.A., 204
- Bourchier, Arthur, 274
- Boyd, Alexander Stuart, 242, 340
- Brontë, Miss Charlotte, 301
- Brooks, Noah, 79, 80, 91, 107, 115, 341
- "Buckeye and Chapparal," 298
- Burgin, G. B., 341

- Californian Gold Fields, the, 38
- "Californian, The," 73
- Chappell, Miss, 318, 319, 320, 321
- Chesterton, G. K., 341
- "Clarence," 298
- Collins, Colonel Arthur, 279, 280, 340
- "Condensed Novels," 75
- "Cressy," 298
- Crewe, the Earl of, 304

- De Bovet, Madame Marie Anne, 343
- Densmore, Mr., 80
- Dickens, Charles, 161, 165
- "Dickens in Camp," 161
- "Dick's Song," 284
- "Drift of Red Wood Camp, A," 311

- "Father Pedro," 283
- Fremont, Mrs. General, 76
- "From Sand Hill to Pine," 298
- Froude, J. A., 181, 206
- Froude, Miss Mary C., 341

- "Gabriel Conroy," 124, 268, 298
- Gounod, Charles, 288
- Griswold, Miss, 279, 288

- Hare, John, 290, 342
- Harte, Bret:—
  - Albany City, home of, in, 2
  - Bartlett, William Francis, lines to, 307
  - Birth of, 1
  - Book-reviewer, as a, 106
  - Boyhood, delicate, 1
  - California, leaves San Francisco for, 37
  - *Californian, The*, contributor to, 73
  - Characters drawn from life by, 98
  - Collaborateur, as a, 264, 266, 267, 271
  - Crefeld—
    - Leaves America for, 151
    - Life at, 161

INDEX

- Harte, Bret—
  - *Daily News* article on, 117
  - Death of, 340
  - Dickens, Charles—
    - Admiration for, 3
    - At the grave of, 166
  - Dramatist, as a, 257
  - Drug store, assistant in a, 58
  - Father, his, 1, 9
  - Favourite novel, his, 334
  - Fresh work, 237
  - Friends made in London, 213
  - Froude, J. A., visits, 180
  - Glasgow—
    - Consul at, 208
    - Life in, 212
  - Goes west at the age of seventeen, 9
  - Goldfields, at the, 38
  - Grave of, in Frimley Churchyard, 341
  - Kemble, Frances Anne, friendship with, 126, 127, 128, 129
  - Lecturer, as a, 132
  - Lectures at—
    - Berkely Springs, 143
    - England, principal towns of, 190, 203
    - Kansas, 140
    - Leeds, 325
    - Ottawa, 136
    - St. Louis, 138
  - Letters to—
    - Black, William, 218
    - Chappell, Miss, 318
    - Collins, Colonel Arthur, 279, 280
    - Jackson, Miss, 326
    - Pemberton, Miss May, 322, 323, 324, 325
    - Pemberton, Mr. T. Edgar, 227, 290, 316
    - Pemberton, Mrs. T. Edgar, 315, 316
- Harte, Bret—
  - Letters to—
    - Son, his (Francis King Harte), 173
    - Van de Velde, Madame, 239
    - Watt, A. P., 310, 311, 312, 313, 314
    - Wife, his, 112, 133, 136, 140, 143, 145, 168, 170, 180, 184, 185, 186, 199, 201
  - Letters, one of his last, 96
  - Letters received from—
    - Besant, Walter, 222
    - Black, William, 219, 220
    - Booth, Edwin, 294
    - Froude, J. A., 224
    - Hay, Colonel John, 222, 238
    - Leighton, Lord, 207
    - Lowell, J. R., 222, 223
    - Robson, Stuart, 259
    - Sullivan, Sir Arthur, 278
  - Literary work, latest, 300
  - Longfellow, tribute to, 228
  - "Luck of Roaring Camp, The," favourable criticisms, 93
  - Married in 1862, 70
  - Messenger of the Adams Express Company, as a, 53
  - Miner, as a, 53
  - Musical criticism by, 187
  - *Overland Monthly, The*, editor of, 82
  - Pemberton, Mrs. T. Edgar, 288
  - Printer, as a, 61
  - San Francisco—
    - Leaves for California, 37
    - Life at, 18
    - "Send off" from, 114
    - Wanderings in, 13
  - Schoolmaster, as a, 63
  - Secretary at the San Francisco Mint, 114
  - Switzerland, visits, 316
  - Twain, Mark, first meeting with, 73
  - Verse, first volume of, 78

INDEX

Harte, Francis King, 78, 340
Harte, Miss Ethel, 340
Harte, Mrs. Bret, 340. See their marriage, her letters, &c.
Harting, J. E., 336
"Hasta Mañana," 288
Hatton, Joseph, 264, and on
Hay, Colonel John, 221, 238, 342
"Heathen Chinee, The," 107
"H.M.S. Pinafore," 277
Holmes, Dr. Oliver Wendell, 68
Hood, Tom, 152, 158, 159, 160

"Iliad of Sandy Bar, The," 62
"In the Tunnel," 99

Jackson, Miss, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, and on
"Judgment of Bolinas Plain, The," 269

Kemble, Mrs. Frances Anne, 126, 127, 128, 129
Kilton, Frederic G., 163
King, Clarence, 308
King, Thomas Starr, 48, 76, 78

Lawrence, J., 69
Le Gallienne, Richard, 341
Leighton, Sir Frederick K., 207
"Lines in an Album," 309
"Lord of Fontenelle, The," 284
"Lost Galleon, The," 7
"Luck of Roaring Camp, The," 86
"Lullaby to a Child," 283

"Maruja," 298
"Miggles," 94
Miller, Joaquin, 70, 81, 149, 165, 267, 341
"Miss Mix," 302
"Mission Bells of Monterey, The," 288
"Mission of San Carmel, At the," 282
"Mliss," 264
"Monte Cristo," 334
Moör, Emmanuel, 284
Morris, Miss Clare, 95
Mulford, Prentice, 70, 73

"Neighbourhoods I have moved from," 75
Northampton, the Marquis of, 303, 341

"On a Pen of Thomas Starr King," 345
"On the Old Trail," 298
"Outcasts of Poker Flat, The," 94
Overland Monthly, The, 82, 87

Pemberton, Miss May, 322, 323, 324, 325
Pemberton, Mrs. T. Edgar, 288, 315
Pemberton, T. Edgar, 267, 273, 290, 314, 316
Pettie, John, 311

Reid, Sir Wemyss, 215
"Relieving Guard," 78
"Reveille, The," 76
"Rise of the Short Story, The," 298
Robertson, Tom, 337
Robson, Stuart, 124
Roosevelt, President, 340
Russell, Miss Annie, 270

San Francisco, 9, 22, 30, 72
"Scotch Lines to A.S.B.," 240
"See Yup," 31
"Selina Sedilia," 101
"Serenade," 70
"Shore and Sedge," 298
"Some Later Verses," 321
"Songs," 286

INDEX

Spanish Californians, 51
Stern, Leo, 288
Stoddard, Charles Warren, 67, 69, 73, 103, 113, 121, 342
"Stories in Light and Shadow," 298
"Sue," 270
Sullivan, Sir Arthur, 277, 278
"Susy," 298

"TALES of the Pine and Cypress," 298
"Tales of Trail and Town," 298
"Tennessee's Partner," 94
"Thankful Blossom," 123
Toole, J. L., 275, 277
Trevelyan, Sir George, 276
Twain, Mark, 70, 73, 75
"Two Men of Sandy Bar," 257

"Uncle Juba," 289
"Unser Karl," 176

VAN DE VELDE, Madame, 214, 251, 275, 296, 310, 334, 338, 340

WARD, ARTEMUS, 337
Watt, A. P., 310, 311, 312, 313, 314
Watts-Dunton, Theodore, 341
Webb, C. H., 73
"What The Chimney Sang," 288
Winter, William, 295, 342

"YOUNG ROBIN GRAY," 242
"Yuba Bill," 54

THE END

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
Edinburgh & London